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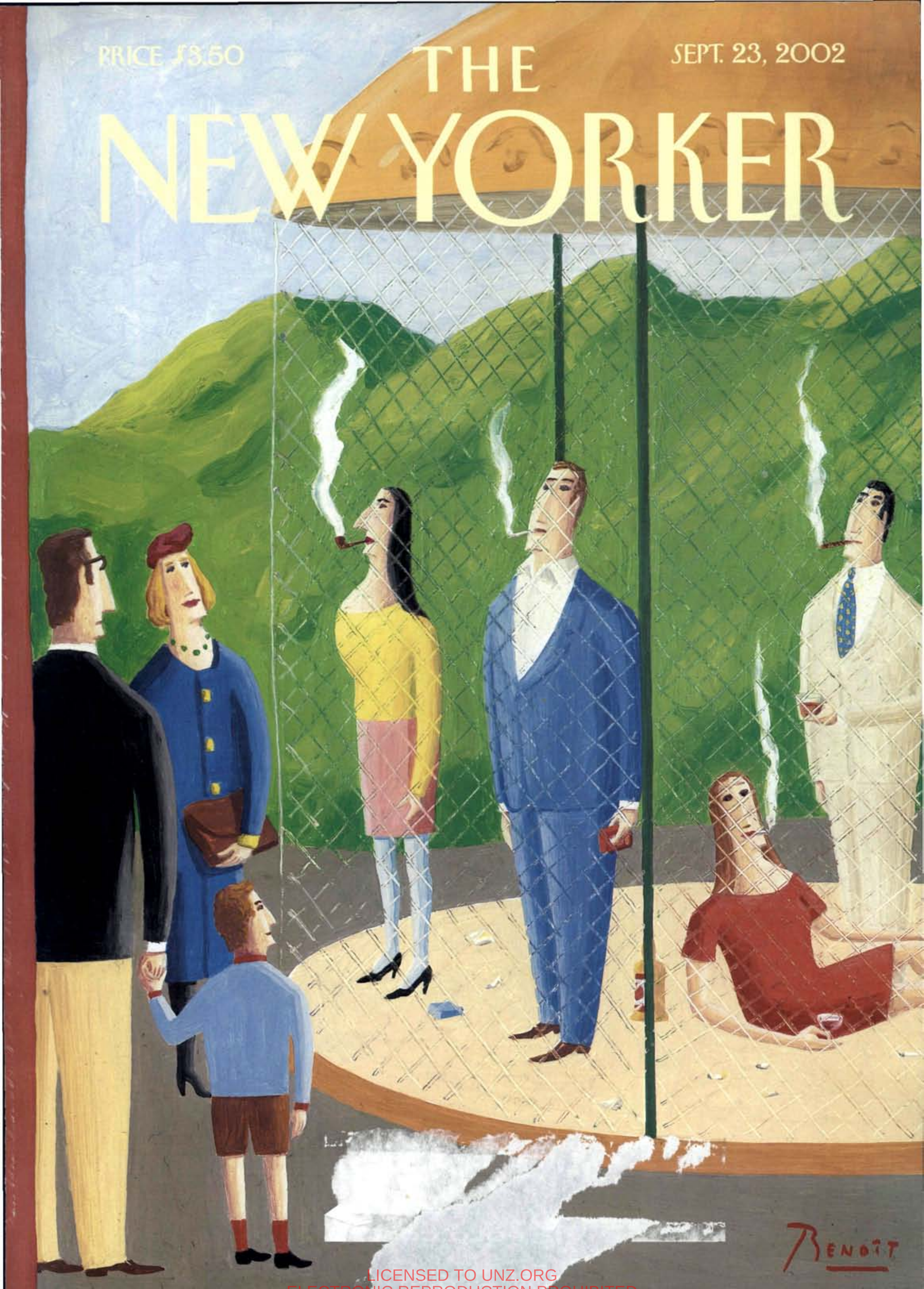
THE NEW YORKER

SEPT. 23, 2002



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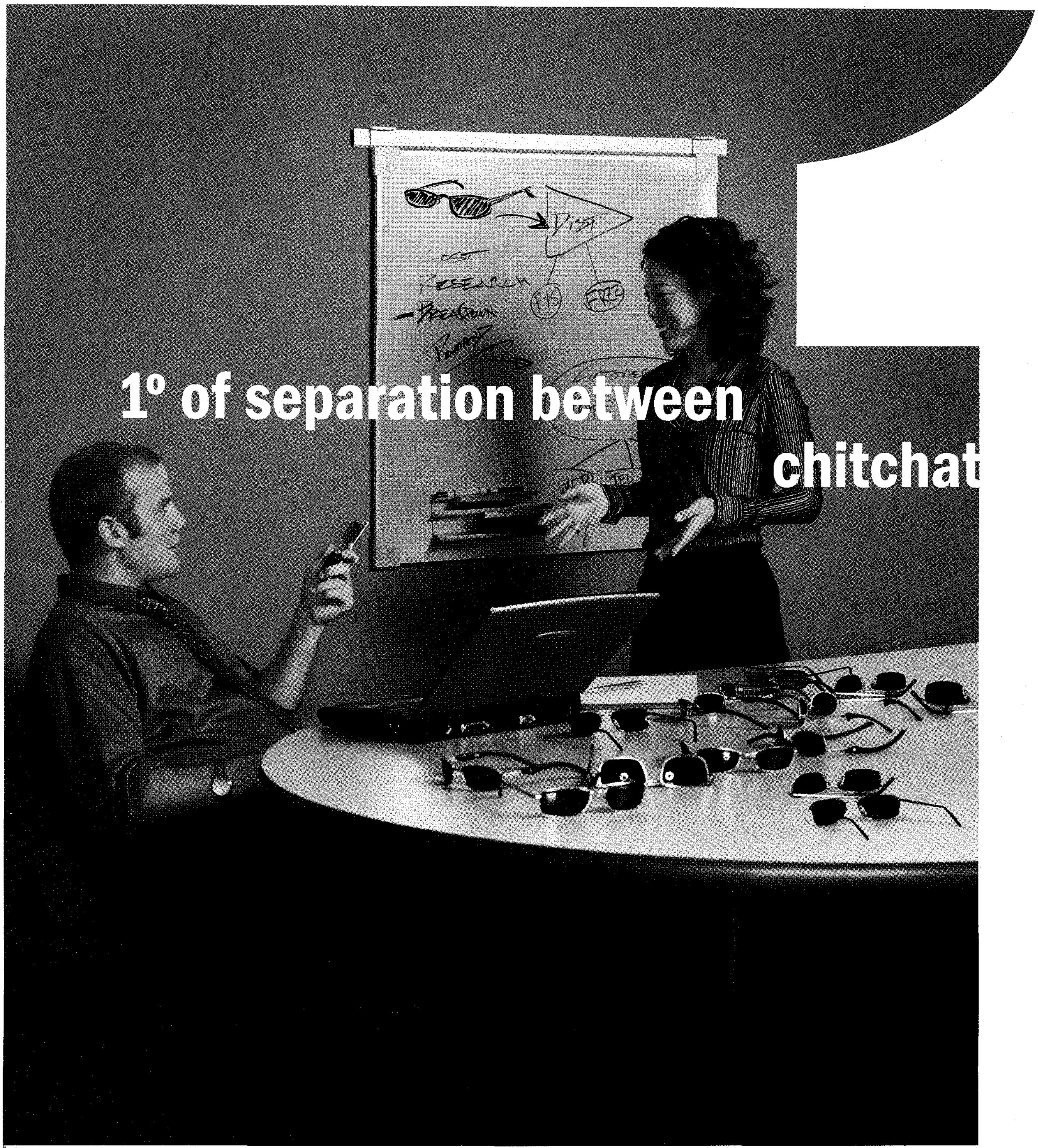

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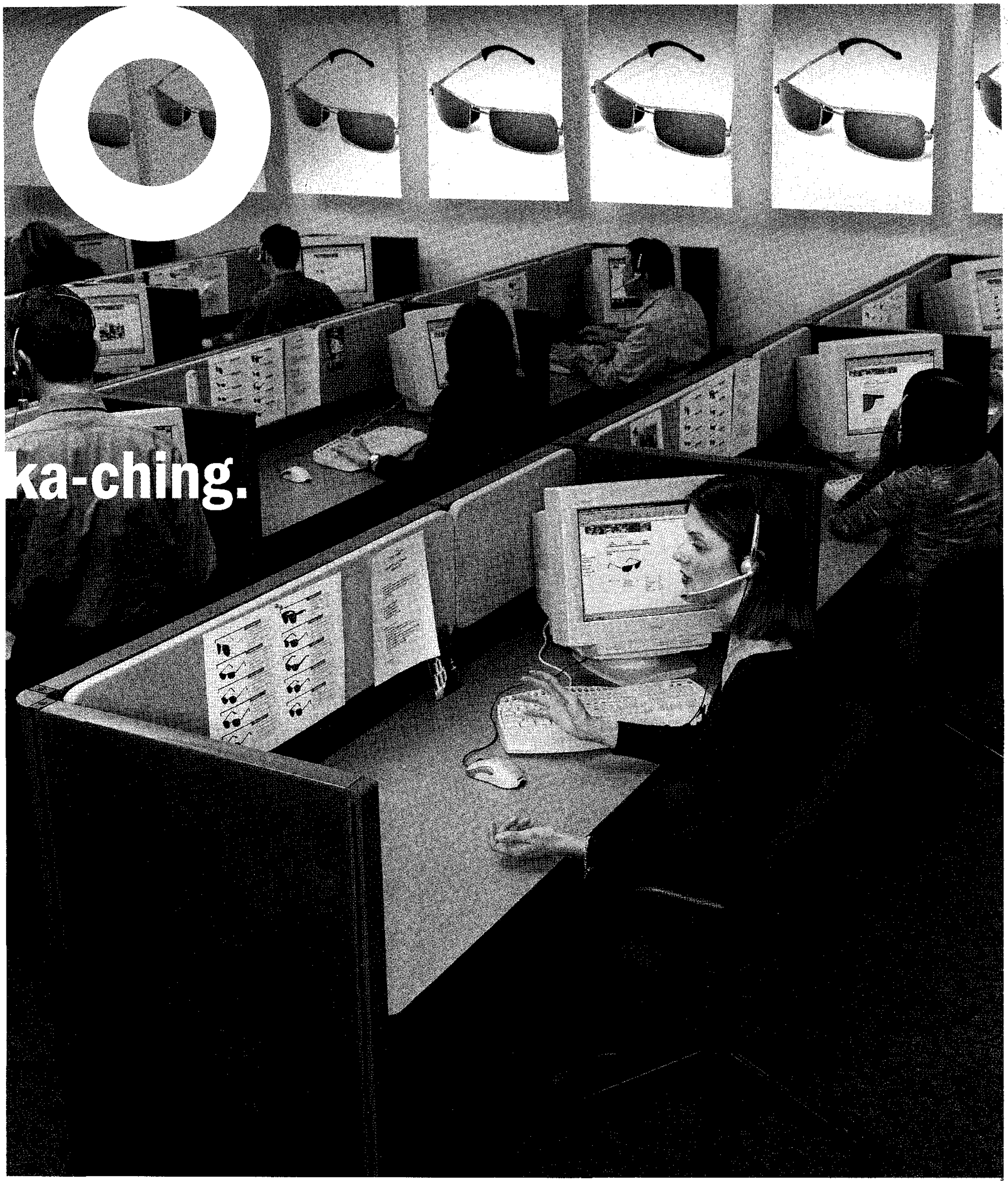
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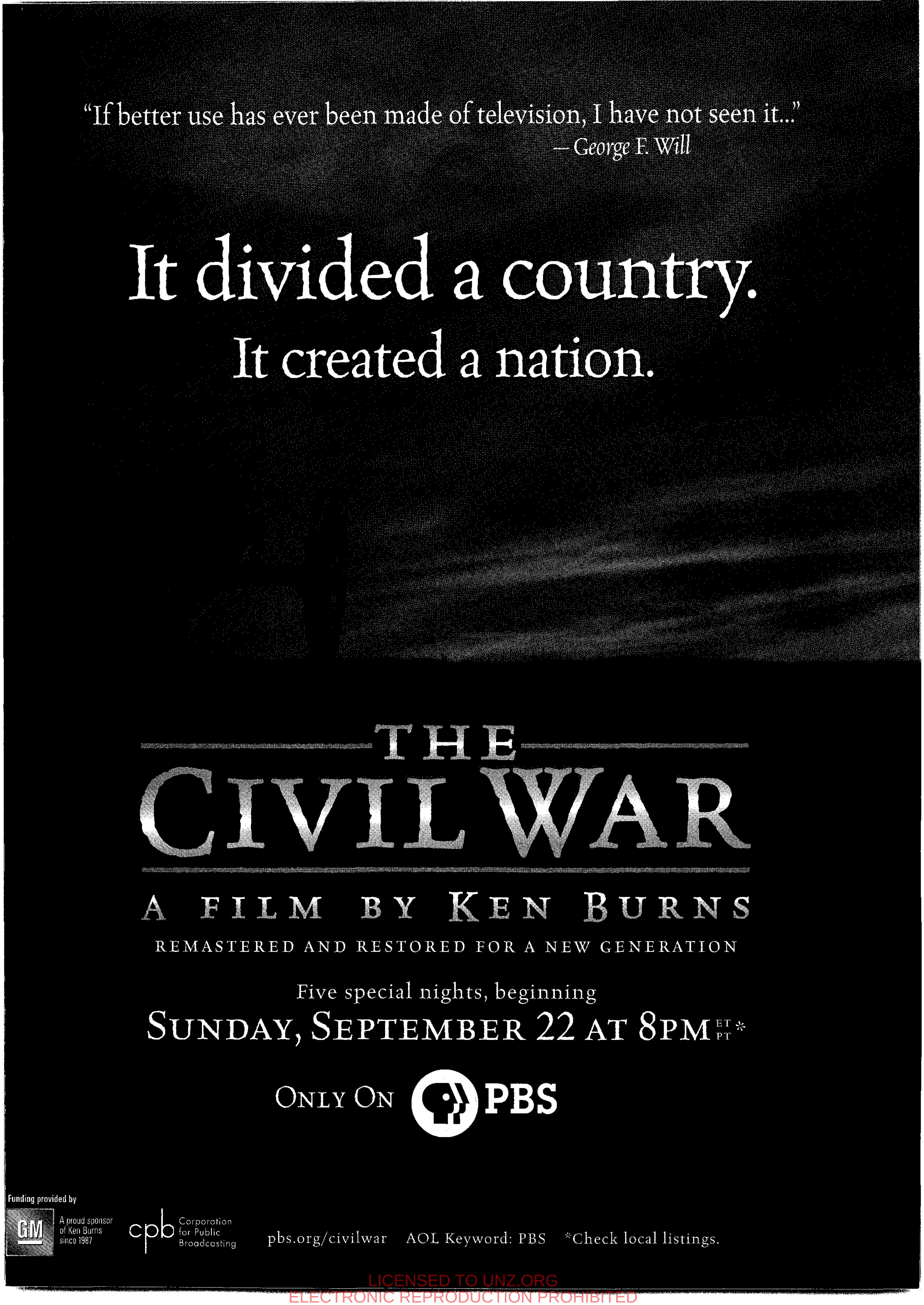

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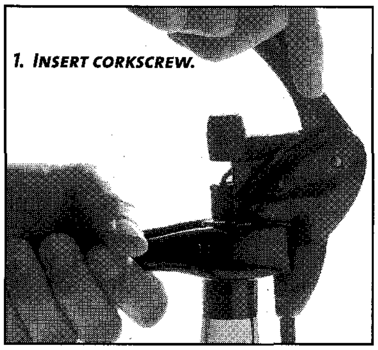

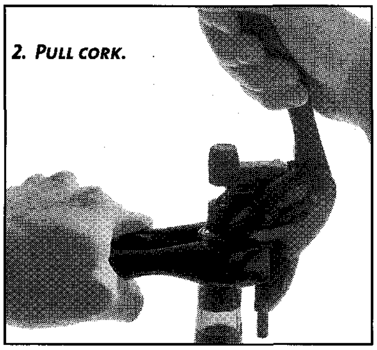

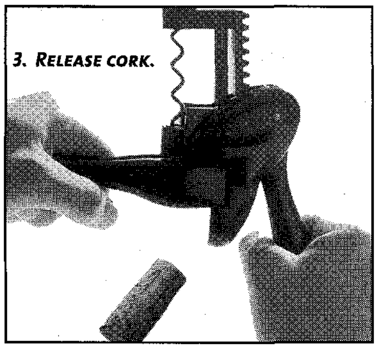

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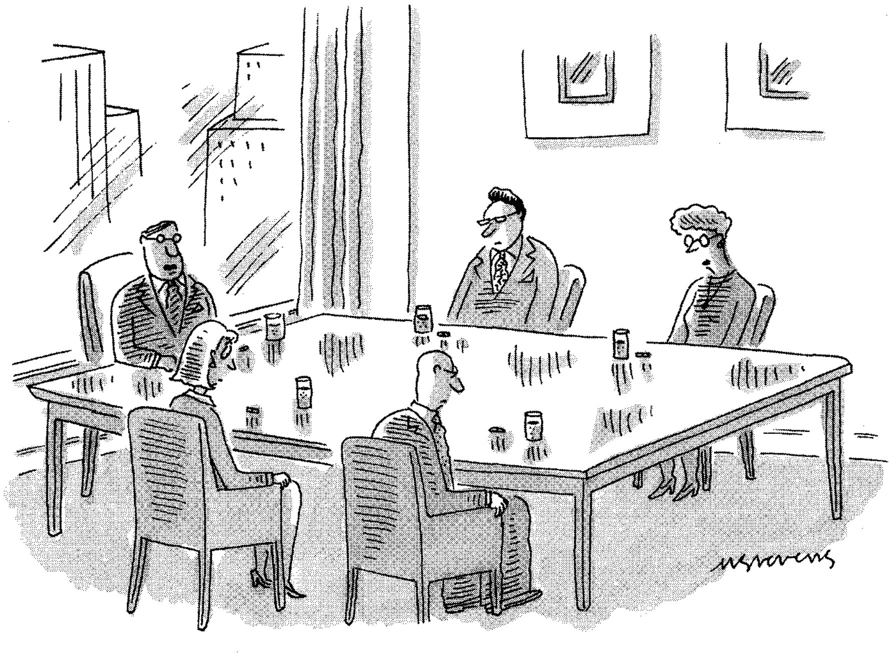

"Before each of you, you will find a bitter pill and a glass of water."

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THE MAIL

WASHINGTON TRAFFIC

The short answer to John Seabrook's question of whether anyone can solve the problem of traffic is maybe—as in, maybe we can make a start ("The Slow Lane," September 2nd). Every six years or so, Congress comes up with major legislation that provides billions of dollars to states for transportation. Next year, the Environment and Public Works Committee, which I chair, will craft a new bill for the next generation. One thing is clear: the answer isn't just more roads. We need all the modes working together, including an expanded national rail system, and smarter, more strategic investments. And we need to rely on local decision-making. New York has its traffic problems, but my home state, Vermont—with the second lowest population in the nation—does, too. Some of my trips to the "big city" of Burlington take twice as long as in the good old days, whenever they were. I will keep Seabrook's article in mind as I sit in traffic, heading for committee meetings.

Senator Jim Jeffords
Washington, D.C.

ANCIENT TRUTHS

Paul Wilkes's article on Father Walter Cuenin depicts a Catholic priest who does not believe in the supremacy of Rome, who believes that there should be women priests and married priests, and who disagrees with Church teaching on homosexuality ("The Reformer," September 2nd). With all of that, how, exactly, is Father Cuenin still Catholic? It sounds as though he would be more comfortable in any number of Protestant churches. As the Church grapples with priestly abuse and episcopal ineffectualness, the last thing it needs is ideologues like Father Cuenin watering down its ancient truths to serve their personal politics. If he cannot be faithful to its teachings, he should leave the Church rather than take advantage of its momentary weakness.

Aaron Honn
Houston, Texas

In these times, it is reassuring to read of the good work of religious leaders like Father Cuenin. While the struggle for justice and openness in the Catholic Church may be the most high-profile upheaval in American Christianity, it is not the only one. In several Protestant denominations, including my own, the United Methodist Church, laypeople and some church leaders have begun to question the exclusion of gays and lesbians from full participation. Churches stand to lose a generation of faithful people who cannot come to terms with a church that says "Love one another" at the same time that it says that there are some among us who cannot serve God, regardless of a deep-seated faith.

Shannon Huffaker
Philadelphia, Pa.

FASHION IN THE DUST

John Steinbeck captured the lives of men and women impoverished by the Depression by focussing on their despair, their commitment to survival, and their sense of hope. Walker Evans's photographs, published in "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men," are a true and poetic statement of what it was like to be a sharecropper in that poorest of decades. Herb Ritts's photographs, which appropriated Evans's work inappropriately, present these people as background dust for fashion's fluff (Portfolio, September 9th). The Okies lived through hard times with values of trust, love, and self-reliance. None of this is reflected in Ritts's pictures, with their substitution of fashion models for the eternally beautiful faces of pain and poverty that we recall from Evans's photographs.

Chris Collins
Sheila Isenberg
Bearsville, N.Y.

•

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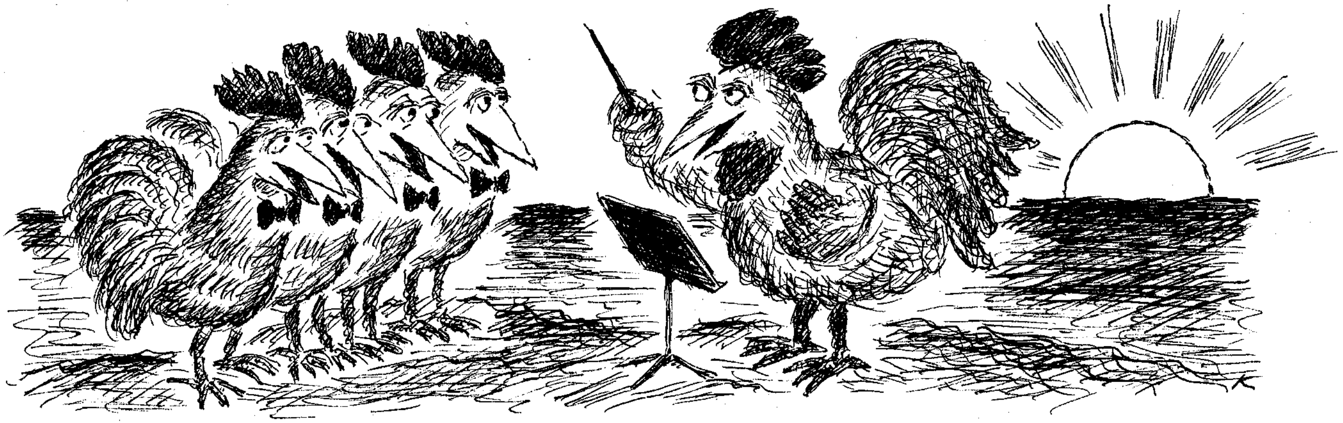

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			18	19	20	21
22	23	24				

AMOUR
James Lapine directs Malcolm Gets and Melissa Errico in a new musical by Michel Legrand (score) and Didier van Cauwelaert (book and lyrics), based on the short story "Le Passe-Muraille," by Marcel Aymé. Previews begin Sept. 20. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

BETTY RULES
An autobiographical pop-rock musical chronicling the ups and downs in the career of the girl band Betty (Amy Ziff, Elizabeth Ziff, and Alyson Palmer). Michael Greif ("Rent") is the director. Previews begin Sept. 21. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 239-6200.)

BURN THIS
Catherine Keener and Edward Norton lead the cast in a Signature Theatre Company revival of Lanford Wilson's 1987 drama. Two previews on Sept. 18. Opens Sept. 19 at 6:30. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

THE BUTTER AND EGG MAN
George S. Kaufman's 1925 comedy about a Midwesterner who moves to New York to have a go at the theatre business, in an Atlantic Theatre Company revival. John Ellison Conlee, Julie Halston, Tom Mardirosian, and Michael McGrath are in the cast. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

CALL THE CHILDREN HOME
A musical set in a brothel in New Orleans at the beginning of the twentieth century, written by the late Thomas Babe (book) and Mildred Kayden (music and lyrics). In previews through Sept. 22. Opens Sept. 23 at 7. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

CONNECTIONS
A newly divorced man experiments with Internet dating, in a romantic comedy by Vernon Church. In previews. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., near 10th St. 206-1515.)

THE DARK KALAMAZOO
The Drama Dept. opens the season with an autobiographical one-woman show by Oni Faida Lampley, about making her first trip to Africa at nineteen, having grown up in Oklahoma City, where she attended all-white schools. In previews. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 633-9632.)

FLOWER DRUM SONG
A revival of the 1958 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, starring Lea Salonga and directed by Robert Longbottom, with a new book by David Henry Hwang. Previews begin Sept. 23. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

GRAHAM NORTON: RED-HANDED
The U.K. comic (and host of BBC America's "So Graham Norton") brings his brand of humor to Manhattan for a brief engagement. Sept. 18-21 and Sept. 24 at 8. Continues through Sept. 28. (St. Clement's, 23 W. 46th St. 866-486-7619.)

HAPPY DAYS
Joseph Chaikin directs Beckett's play at the theatre in which it premièred, in New York in 1961. With Joyce Aaron as Winnie and Ron Faber as Willie. In previews. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

JOLSON AND COMPANY
A musical about the life of the early show-biz superstar, written by Stephen Mo Hanan (who portrays Jolson) and Jay Berkow. In previews. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

JULIUS CAESAR
The experimental Access Theatre Company's staging of Shakespeare's play, adapted and directed by Randy Sharp. In previews through Sept. 19. Opens Sept. 20 at 8. (One Sheridan Sq. 807-9300.)

LITTLE HAM
An encore staging of a musical based on the Langston Hughes play of the same name, which was staged last fall by the Amas Musical Theatre. It has music by Judd Woldin, lyrics by Richard Engquist and Mr. Woldin, and a book by Dan Owens. In previews. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

A MAN OF NO IMPORTANCE
Roger Rees and Faith Prince star in a musical by Terrence McNally (book), Stephen Flaherty (music), and Lynn Ahrens (lyrics), based on the 1994 movie, set in Dublin in the sixties, about a middle-aged, closeted bus driver who gets into trouble when he proposes Wilde's "Salomé" as his church troupe's next theatrical production. Joe Mantello is the director. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THE MAYOR'S LIMO
A comedy by Mark Nassar ("Tony n' Tina's Wedding"), about a homeless man who becomes the center of a political war after he unwittingly urinates on the mayor's car during a demonstration. In previews through Sept. 24. Opens Sept. 25 at 8. (Kraine, 85 E. 4th St. 352-3101.)

MY OLD LADY
Israel Horovitz's latest play stars Peter Friedman as a man who inherits a Paris apartment, only to find that it is occupied by a ninety-year-old woman (Siân Phillips) and her daughter (Jan Maxwell). David Esbjornson is the director. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Frank Gorshin portrays George Burns, in a one-man show about the comic's life, written by Rupert Holmes. John Tillinger is the director. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER
A Pearl Theatre Company production of Oliver Goldsmith's 1773 comedy. In previews through Sept. 21. Opens Sept. 22 at 7. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

THE WORLD OVER
Playwrights Horizons kicks off the season with a new play by Keith Bunin, about a young man who believes he is the lost prince of a mythical kingdom. In previews. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

THE BOYS FROM SYRACUSE
This Roundabout Theatre revival of the 1938 Rodgers and Hart comedy based on Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors" has a new book by Nicky Silver, based on George Abbot's original script—and something has been lost in translation. Rather than perked up, the show feels freighted by the update. Scott Ellis's direction and Martin Pakledinaz's costumes have Looney Tunes written all over them. The resulting hybrid of humor brings to mind the broad, silly, knowing farce that Carol Burnett's company patented in the seventies, which hasn't aged well, either. Rodgers and Hart's songs are timeless, and the game cast renders them well, but that's still not a good enough reason to sit through everything else. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
In the Aquila Theatre Company's excellent production of Shakespeare's intricately foolish story, the laughs are many and the delights deep. The seven cast members, led here by Mark Saturno and Louis Butelli as the two sets of twins, mix remarkable range with insane energy. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

ENDPAPERS
The first full-length play by Thomas McCormack, the retired C.E.O. of an independently owned publishing house (St. Martin's), about choosing a successor as C.E.O. of an independently owned publishing house, is highly literate (imagine: grammar jokes!) and full of zingy one-liners. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

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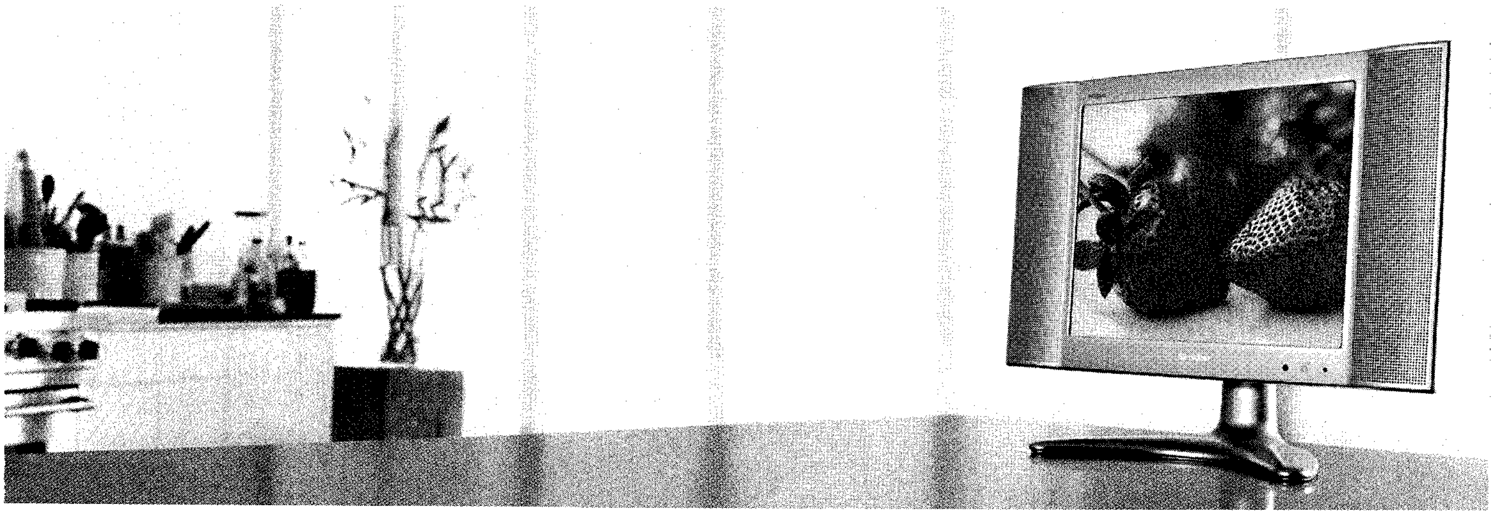

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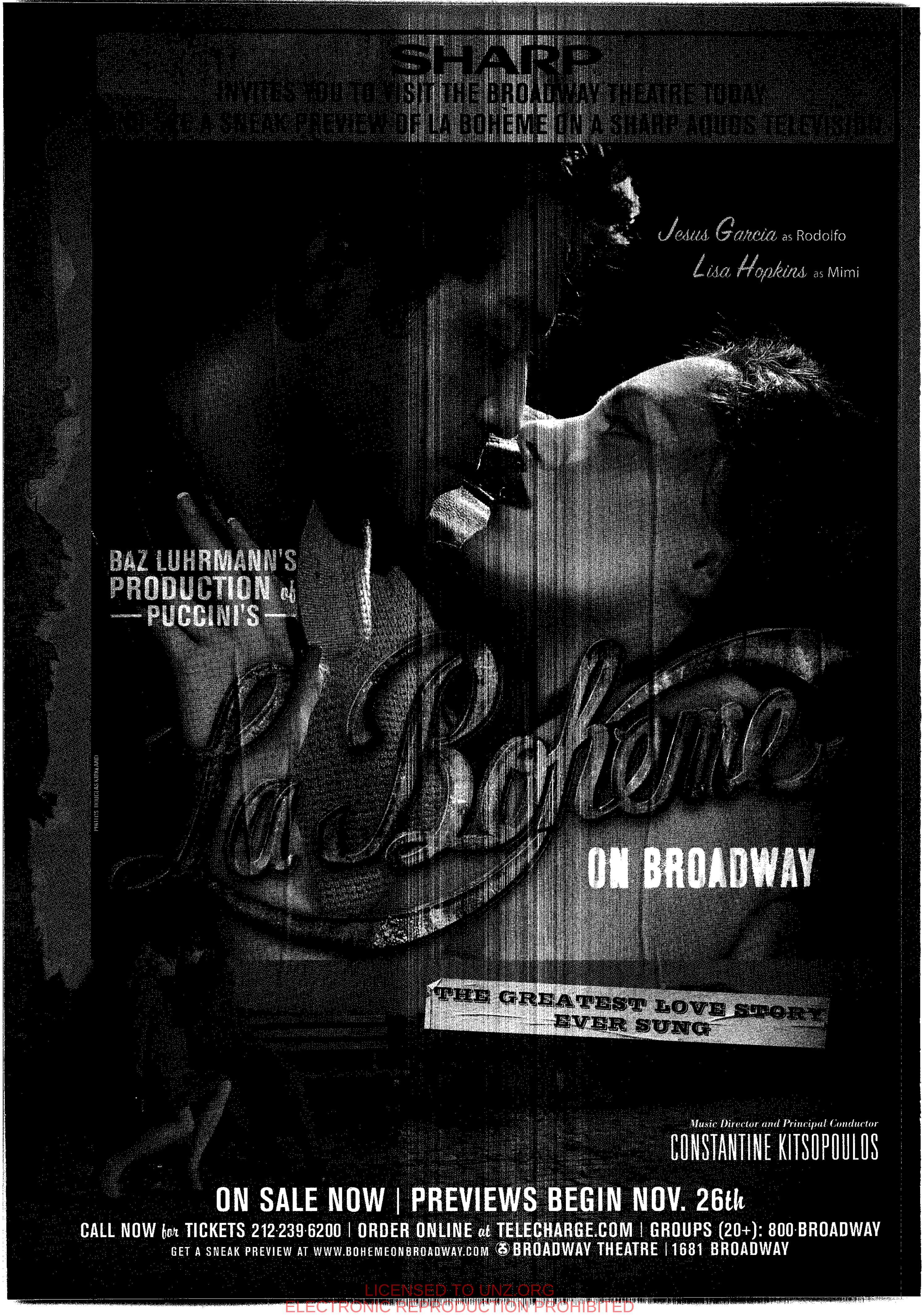
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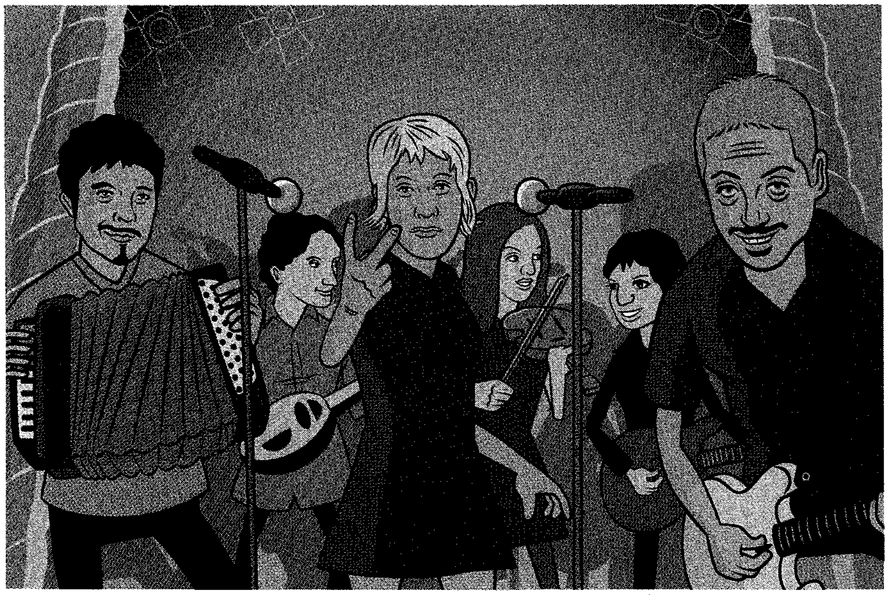
FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE
The brilliant Edie Falco's star turn in Terence McNally's sentimental two-character study about a man and a woman marginalized by life while struggling to embrace it is the best reason to see this derivative work, which owes a great deal to William Inge. She's an over-forty waitress who once dreamed of being an actress; Johnny (Stanley Tucci) is the hyperkinetic cook at the restaurant where Frankie works. He wants children, she's afraid of commitment. Unfortunately, McNally exploits Inge's weakest traits as a writer—corny exposition, faulty psychological reasoning—and turns the volume up high on them. The play is a surface crowd-pleaser, and Tucci's strident surface charm works perfectly with it, but Falco's steady reasonableness, even in Frankie's moments of panic, shows up both Tucci and the play. With this performance, she joins the ranks of Laurette Taylor and Shirley Booth: great American actresses who garner audience sympathy through lyrical naturalism. Joe Mantello is the director. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)



CONSTANT REVOLUTION *The rock-and-roll stalwarts the Mekons, who began in the Leeds punk scene and helped found the alternative-country movement, celebrate their twenty-fifth anniversary with a series of shows across the city (see Night Life).*

MICHAEL WELDON

THE GRADUATE
This pointless production is endless and full of dead air. There are exactly two pleasures here: Victor Slezak, as Mr. Robinson, and Murphy Guyer, as Benjamin's father; they depict beautifully the anger and anxiety that underlie their postwar poolside bonhomie. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/15/02.) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GUYS
A dialogue between a fire captain who lost eight of his men on September 11th and an editor who helps him prepare their eulogies, written by Anne Nelson, a journalist, and directed by Jim Simpson, the Flea Theatre's artistic director. It's an artful and moving re-creation of the relationships New Yorkers formed as a result of that day—of the way that people "jumped tracks" and suddenly saw into each other's lives—and an admirable tribute to the men who died. (The Flea, 41 White St. 206-1515.)

HAIRSPRAY
This musical-comedy version of the 1988 John Waters movie, with a book by Mark O'Donnell and Thomas Meehan, a score by Marc Shaiman, and lyrics by Shaiman and Scott Wittman, takes off from the opening number and never loses its momentum. In Baltimore in 1962, the rotund teen Tracy Turnblad (Marissa Jaret Winokur) wants to dance, make out with the best-looking boy in town, and integrate "The Corny Collins Show," a local teen-dance TV program. David Rockwell's sets and William Ivey Long's costumes combine and highlight the period artifacts in an ecstasy of gorgeous bad taste, offered with just enough invention to achieve lyrical wit. What the show is parodying was trivial to begin with, so the parodies don't sting—they're not meant to. Instead they break free into some goofy new realm of pop Dada. With the great Harvey Fierstein, plucked, shaved, and padded, as Tracy's mother, Edna Turnblad, a housewife who takes in laundry but who gets to appear, at the climax of the show, in flaming pink. Jack O'Brien is the director. (9/2/02) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

HARLEM SONG
Essentially a revue, using both old and new compositions, selected or written by the director George C. Wolfe and the show's talented music supervisors, Zane Mark and Daryl Waters. It has no dialogue to speak of—or, at least, no dialogue that contributes significantly to the plot or helps to convey the time line framing the show's eleven sections, each of which marks a particular moment in the neighborhood's social history ("The Harlem Renaissance," "La Imigración," "The Depression," and so on). Like Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" and the novels of Terry McMillan, it is a form of art whose aesthetic concerns are secondary to its desire to make "the people" feel good, about themselves and their community. The Harlem of "Harlem Song" is not an urban wasteland in the process of reinventing itself. It is a realm of legend and lore, and a mythical homeland, which it is our duty as theatregoers, as citizens, to celebrate. This is a point worth making, but not one that bears much repeating. And since there is little factual detail to support this portrayal, "Harlem Song" degenerates rather swiftly into propaganda. We see the neighborhood's fabulous past, and we hope for its fabulous future, all without quite knowing how Harlem became Harlem in the first place. (8/19 & 26/02) (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 307-7171.)

INTO THE WOODS
Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's 1987 fairy-tale-derived musical isn't so much a rethinking of fairy tales as it is a parable about growing up and finding your place in the community, and about learning to live with uncertainty and ambivalence. The archetypal material is treated with suitable directness and simplicity, and yet the show lacks none of the intelligence or emotional honesty we expect from Sondheim. Mr. Lapine is the director. (5/13/02) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

JOE
In Richard Maxwell's latest play, which he wrote and directed, five actors portray the title character—an ordinary guy who loves the Jets, pines for his teen-age crush, and spends his life trying to figure out what to do with it—at different ages and different stages of existential crises. Dressed in red hooded sweatshirts and jeans, they deliver long monologues in the playwright's trademark flat tones and sing his quasi-pop songs without quite following the three-piece band accompanying them. The opening scenes, in which the young Joe (Richard Zhuravenko) and then the teen-age Joe (Matthew Stadelmann) struggle with adolescence and the sudden death of Joe's mother, are especially affecting. The adult Joes, however, are less interesting ("So I'm lost, so what?" one says), so the character as a whole is less emotionally engaging than he should be. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Sept. 29.)

OKLAHOMA!
There are stupendous pleasures in the Royal National Theatre's version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1943 American classic. Many of them are due to the high-spirited, humorous choreography of Susan Stroman, and to Anthony Ward's picturesque set. But technique, which can make a show work, is not enough to make it wonderful. (4/1/02) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

PETER AND VANDY
A cinéma-vérité take on the relationship of two young lovers written by Jay DiPietro, who also stars and directs. (Paradise, 64 E. 4th St. 206-1515.)

THE PARADISE PROJECT
The performance artist John Kelly's meditation on the 1945 French film "Children of Paradise," with music by Michael Torke and Mark Campbell. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Closes Sept. 28.)

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER
Mark Twain's novel has been adapted for the stage and musicalized by Neil Berg (score and lyrics) and Bernie Garza and Ray Roderick (book). (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

RICKY JAY: ON THE STEM
The master magician's tribute to the flimflammery and weird entertainments that have cropped up over the years along the length of Broadway, "the stem that winds the watch" of New York City. Prepare to be happily hornswoggled. Directed by David Mamet. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

ROMAN NIGHTS
The long friendship between Tennessee Williams and Anna Magnani is the subject of a new play by Franco D'Alessandro. (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

SPLIT
Michael Weller's comic drama about the breakup of a "perfect" couple. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

TAKE ME OUT
From London's Donmar Warehouse, a new play by Richard Greenberg, in which a heroic baseball player comes out to the press. Joe Mantello is the director. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Just like the 1967 movie it's based on, this musical is supposed to be all madcap Jazz Age fizziness, but the harder the cast sings and dances, the flatter the enterprise falls. The colors seem garish rather than gay, the manic energy feels forced at gunpoint, and the only thing you recall about Sutton Foster's Millie after you leave the theatre is her huge white teeth and bouncy black bob. Call it thoroughly boring, shrilly. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

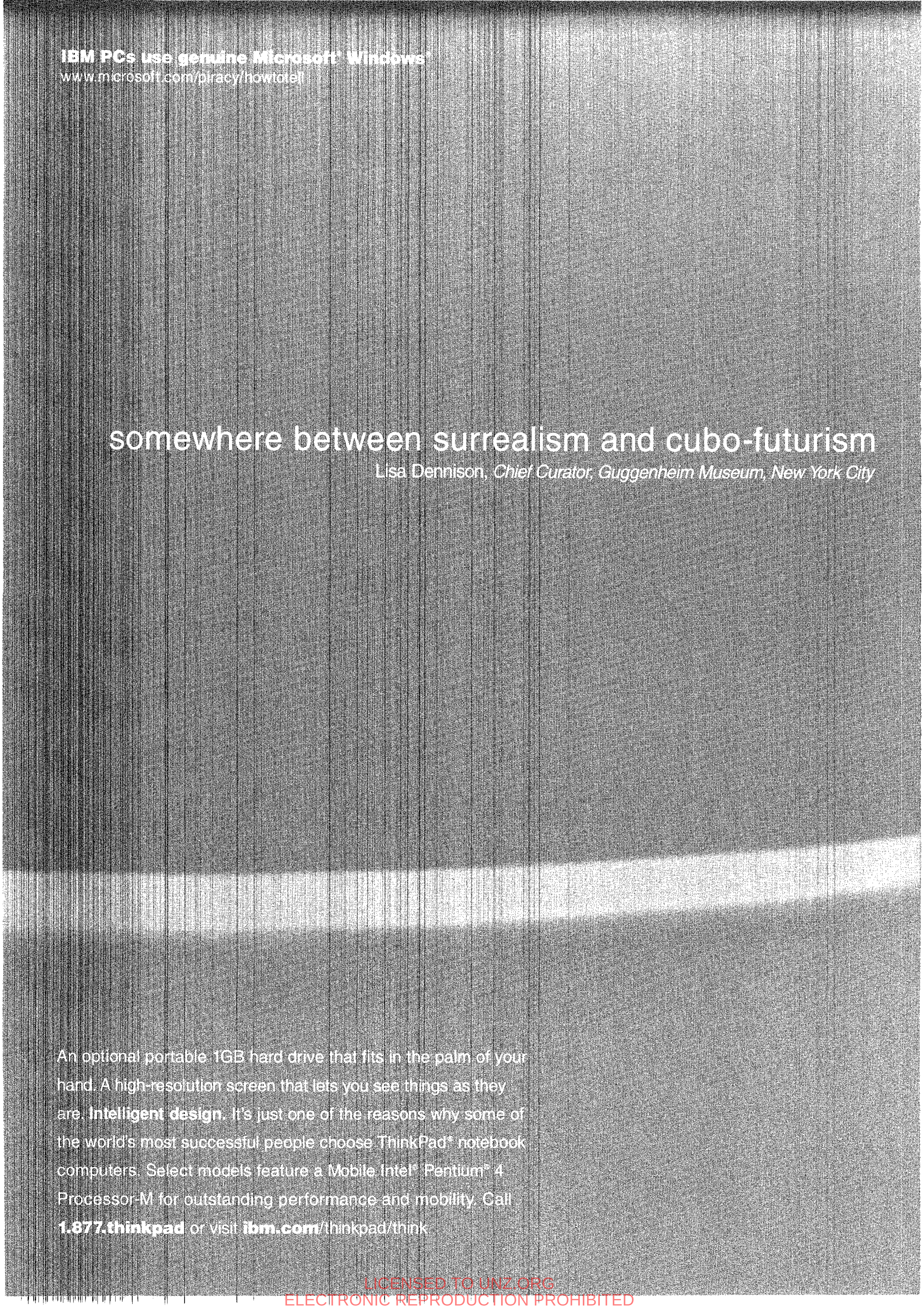
THREE-CORNERED MOON
A Keen Company revival of Gertrude Tonkonogy's 1933 comedy, about a crazy Brooklyn family dealing with life during the Depression. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 560-7284. Closes Sept. 29.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.



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Lisa Dennison, *Chief Curator, Guggenheim Museum, New York City*

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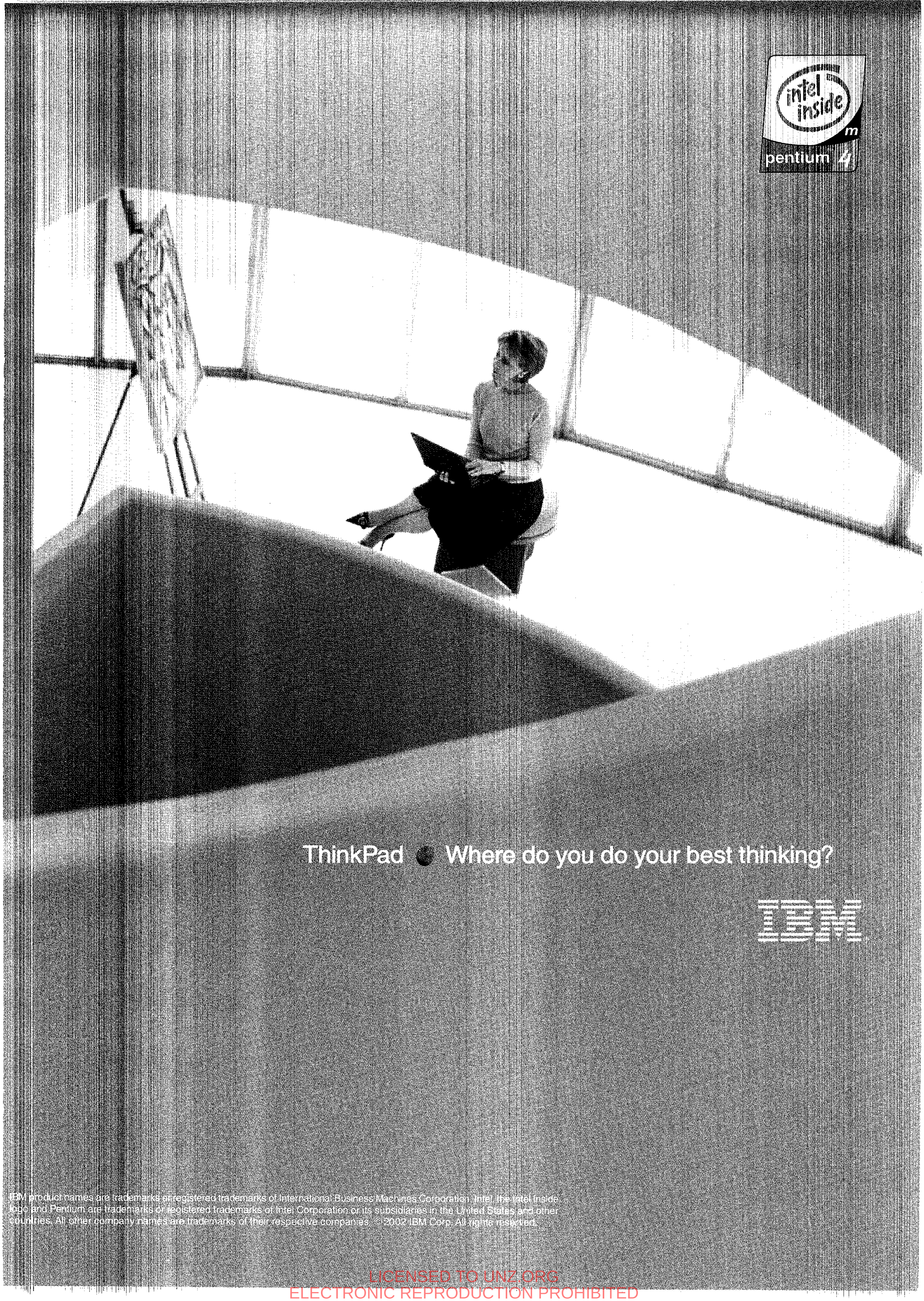
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CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.

METAMORPHOSES
Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

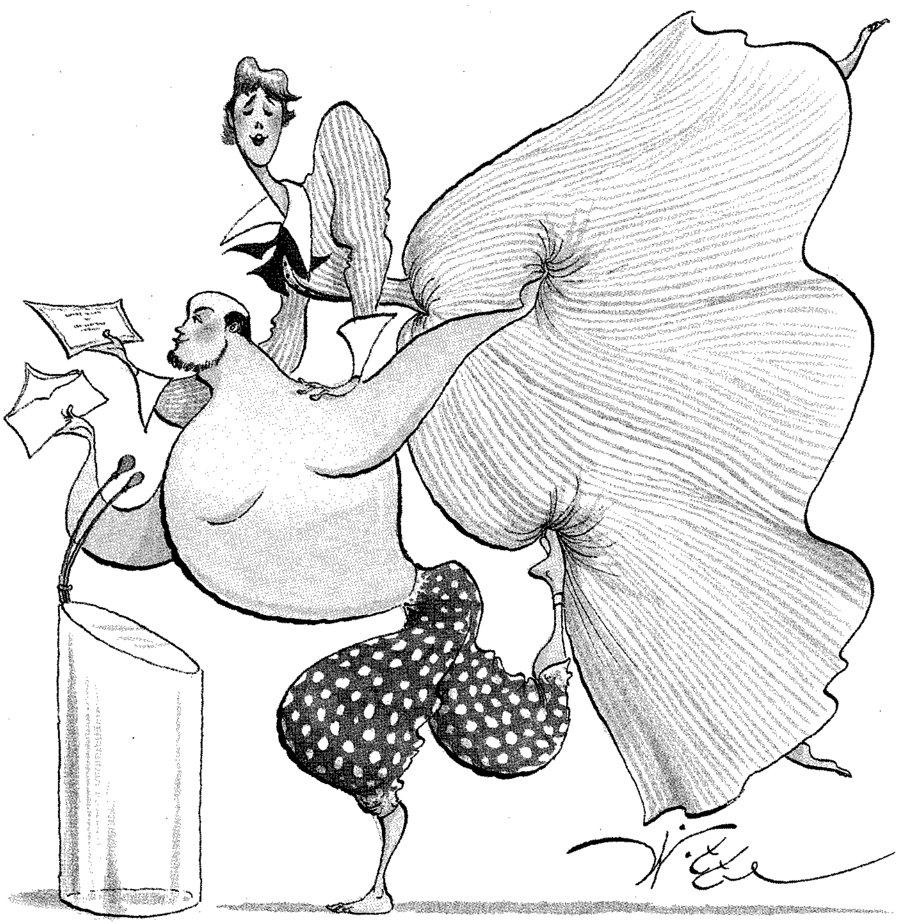
DANCE

EVENING STARS MUSIC AND DANCE SERIES
Sept. 18 at 7: The dancer and choreographer Trisha Brown performs her solo "Solo," and her company follows with "Five Part Weather Invention," "Interlude 1: Rage," and "Canto/Pianto." ♦ Sept. 20 at 7: The Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company performs repertory works under the stars. (Battery Park, State St. at Battery Pl. No tickets necessary.)

JAMIE BISHTON/DANCE
The former Twyla Tharp and White Oak dancer premières "41," a reworking of a solo he did last year called "40," which grew out of an unusual request. For his fortieth birthday, he asked his family and friends to give him images of themselves instead of gifts; he created the work based on the positions they took in those pictures. The company also performs repertory works and other premières, including "You Think You Really Know Me," a solo for Stephanie Liapis, and the duet "From a Life Together." (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 334-7479. Sept. 19-22 at 8.)

"CONCERTO FOR THE LOST"
In the title work, the choreographer mimics the concerto form by placing solo performances against the movement of the troupe. "For Two," "9-9," and "Requiem" complete the program. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 924-0077. Sept. 19-20 at 9 and Sept. 21-22 at 8.)

RANDY JAMES DANCE WORKS
The New Jersey-based company presents repertory work and the première of "Among the Stars That Have a Different Birth." (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 924-0077. Sept. 20-21 at 8 and Sept. 22 at 3. Through Sept. 29.)



Keely Garfield and Lawrence Goldhuber host the Bessies, at the Joyce.

PHAT TUESDAYS
The lovingly curated performance series enters its fifth year, and this time out dance figures largely. Paul Lazar of Big Dance Theatre re-creates a little number that Koshiro Matsumoto, the seventh-generation Kabuki actor of that name, performed in 1925 for Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, who filmed it. "There are these incredible fan acrobatics," Lazar says. "I, of course, do the moves without any skills to speak of. So to make up for it I'll do the dance twice." The way horror-movie heroes always gravitate toward trouble inspired "Corner Score," a solo by the arresting John Jasperse dancer Juliette Mapp. And Chelsea Bacon offers an excerpt from her upcoming "Sweet Nothings for My Neurosurgeon," a talking trapeze dance about a very big brain tumor. In between the acts, the writer Jonathan Ames, who, unlike the mass of men, leads a life of loud desperation, will tell us about it. (Galapagos, 70 N. 6th St., between Wythe and Kent Sts., Williamsburg. 718-782-5188. Sept. 24 at 8.)

MISNOMER DANCE THEATRE
The choreographer Chris Elam presents a series of collaborative performances inspired by Balinese dance but grounded in theatrical transformations: arms sprout from heads, a dancer metamorphoses into an ostrich, five dancers appear to share a single head. This week, Elam is joined by Yoshiko Chuma. (Chashama, 135 W. 42nd St. 206-1515. Sept. 22-23 at 8:30. Through Sept. 29.)

"THE BESSIES"
This year, the Bessies, which almost no one has heard of because they're the Oscars of modern dance (and other obscure arts), will be hosted by the comically pesky and cranky Keely Garfield and her shadow, Lawrence Goldhuber, who is probably the only three-hundred-and-fifty-pound dancer one could legitimately call dainty. Asked about their plans for the big night, Garfield says, "There will be costume dramas—as in, 'What should I wear?'" The entertainment will also include modern dancing by the Donna Uchizono troupe; confessions by Dominique Mercy, a longtime member of Pina Bausch's company; and the guitar experimentalist Vernon Reid jazzing it up with friends. The event tends to sell out early. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 924-0077. Sept. 20 at 7.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

VERIZON MUSIC FESTIVAL
Sept. 18-19 at 8: **Tony Bennett.** Entering his seventies hasn't slowed down America's foremost popular vocalist. His albums get more interesting, and his live appearances still set the standard. See him now; tell your grandchildren later. (Carnegie Hall.) ♦ Sept. 20 at 8: **India, Huey Dunbar,** and **Kevin Ceballo** take a turn at Carnegie Hall. ♦ Sept. 21 at 12:30: An eclectic mix of artists blend smooth jazz (**Al Jarreau**), cabaret (**Lea DeLaria**), jam-band grooves (**Jazz Mandolin Project**), and funky improvisation (**Kenny Garrett**) in a free show in Battery Park. Sept. 21 at 8: **Isaac Hayes** and **Oleta Adams** at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. (30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.) ♦ Sept. 22 at 8: Smooth jazz reigns supreme at the Beacon Theatre, as two giants of the genre, the saxophonist **David Sanborn** and the keyboardist **Joe Sample,** are joined by a younger, equally mellow upstart, the trumpeter **Chris Botti.** (Broadway at 74th St.) (See also the Jazz Standard. For more information about the festival, call 501-1390.)

COLDPLAY
The flagship band of a new movement of emotive British rock distinguishes itself with stark, earnest songs built around the soaring vocals of Chris Martin. (Jones Beach Theatre. 212-307-7171. Sept. 19 at 8.)

NY GUITAR FESTIVAL
Talk about a long, strange trip: **Jorma Kaukonen,** the **Persuasions,** and **Tony Trischka** join forces

MICHAEL WITTE

to pay tribute to Jerry Garcia. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 19 at 8.)

MEKONS

The enduring indie-rock combo kicks off its twenty-fifth-anniversary celebration on Sept. 19 at CBGB with a show that reaches back to the early days, when the singer-guitarist Jon Langford could be found on the drum kit and the set list more or less began and ended with "Never Been a Riot." (315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. 982-4052.) The following evening the group plays an early acoustic set at Galapagos, where the band's art work is on display. (70 N. 6th St., Williamsburg. 718-782-5188.) Later that night Langford and company travel to Maxwell's to perform songs from 1985 to 1991, the period marked by the addition of the silken-voiced Sally Timms and the band's embrace of what has since become known as alternative country. (1039 Washington St., Hoboken. 201-653-1703.) The group winds down the party on Sept. 21 at the Mercury Lounge with material from their more recent work, including their new album, "Oooh!" (217 E. Houston St. 260-4700.)

"WORLD CONSCIOUS REGGAE"

Twenty years ago, the South African singer **Lucky Dube** had a successful career working in the traditional forms of his homeland, but he switched to reggae in 1984 as a challenge to apartheid. He hasn't looked back since, although his highly charged repertoire is not without its humor—he's performed such pop ballads as Foreigner's "I Want to Know What Love Is." / The dapper, bespectacled, Jamaican-born, London-raised artist **Linton Kwesi Johnson** is known as the founder of dub poetry, the recitation of verse over a rhythmic backing. His writing may have been published in Penguin's Modern Classics series, but his fiery vernacular protestations, inspired in part by Gil Scott-Heron, are anything but dry. Johnson and his longtime backing ensemble, the Dennis Bovell Band, turn out refreshing performances that are as lively as they are political. (The Roxy, 515 W. 18th St. For more information, call 243-4940. Sept. 19 at 9.)

JAZZ COMPOSER PORTRAITS

Billy Strayhorn's reputation will never be in the shadows again. Duke Ellington's trusted compositional alter ego has, in the past decade, finally been given his due. His superbly crafted pieces will be interpreted by the big band led by the pianist **Eric Reed,** a Wynton Marsalis associate who himself has securely stepped out of his former employer's umbra. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Sept. 20-21 at 8.)

"MUSIC AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN"

The World Music Institute and the Center for Traditional Music & Dance bring together more than eighty musicians and dancers for a three-day festival of performances and workshops in the tree-lined Bohemian Hall & Beer Garden. Highlights include appearances by Spain's Radio Tarifa, the Albanian vocalist Merita Halili, the oud virtuoso Simon Shaheen, and the Turkish Gypsy violinist Kemani Cemal. (29-19 24th Ave., Astoria, Queens. For more information, call 212-545-7536. Sept. 20 from 6:30 to 10, Sept. 21 from noon to midnight, and Sept. 22 from noon to 10.)

SOUND CLASH

The Jamaican d.j. **U-Roy,** known also as the Originator thanks to his innovative toasting, or talking over a song, meets up with **Kool Herc,** the American who in mixing together two copies of the same record invented the breakbeat, one of hip-hop's core elements, in a concert featuring two of Kingston's legendary sound systems—**Sir Coxsone's Downbeat** and **King Jammy's Super Sound.** The afternoon, which amounts to a crash course in the influence of Jamaican music, is organized by the life-style magazine *Tokion.* The sharp-witted rapper **Talib Kweli** is the host. (East River Park Amphitheatre. Enter at Grand St. Sept. 21 at 2. No tickets necessary.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra opens its season with a tribute to Art Blakey, the volcanic drummer and bandleader who with his star-studded Jazz Messengers ensembles helped invent and keep alive hard bop. The soloists here include such Blakey band members as the trombonist **Curtis Fuller,** the saxophonist **Bobby Watson,** and, of course, the former Messengers trumpeter **Wynton Marsalis.** (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. Sept. 20-21 at 8.)

BOB GELDOF

He's best known as the architect of Live Aid and for spearheading the wave of rock-star altruism that followed the 1985 benefit concerts, but Geldof first found fame in the late seventies as the front man for the Boomtown Rats. His latest solo album, "Sex, Age & Death," has more bite and cynicism than one might expect from the same Sir Bob who crafted "Do They Know It's Christmas?" (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 307-7171. Sept. 21 at 9.)

PUBLIC ENEMY

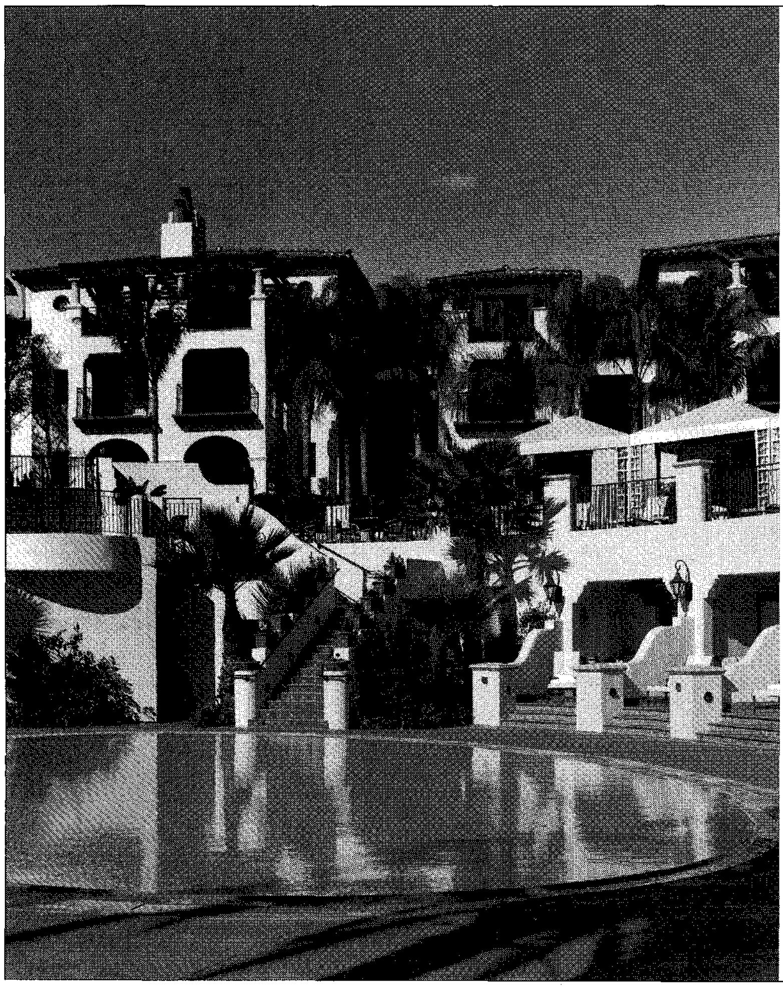
Their days of controversy and prominence have long since passed, but the band that did more for hip-hop than the Sex Pistols and the Clash did for punk rock remains as strident as ever. They are touring behind their eighth album, "Revolverlution," which offers a mixture of new studio tracks, live recordings, and remixes created by Public Enemy fans. With the underground Los Angeles rap collective **Dilated Peoples** and the positive-thinking hip-hop outfit **Blackalicious.** (The World, Broadway at 43rd St. 307-7171. Sept. 24 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS

376 9th St., at Sixth Ave., Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Sept. 21: Former national flat-picking champion **Orrin Star** brings his guitar, banjo, and mandolin to the intimate back room of this Park Slope watering hole.



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BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Sept. 19: **Susana Baca** is a Lima, Peru, native whose sensual music is a sumptuous mix of Spanish, Andean, and African influences. Baca sings with the dreamy power of a warm sea breeze; in a previous life she could easily have been a siren. Expect plenty of songs from her latest album, "Espírituvivo," which was recorded with her longtime Peruvian band, along with the organist **John Medeski.** The Cuban guitarist **Juan Carlos-Formell** opens. Sept. 20: Heart and quirkiness abound when the songwriter **Mason Jennings** leads his trio of Minnesotans in an evening of melodic folk pop. Sept. 21-22: The Texas-based trio **Spoon** stops by with songs from its spectacular new release, "Kill the Moonlight."

IRVING PLAZA

17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Sept. 18: **Wire,** one of the more versatile and exciting bands to emerge from the seventies British punk-rock scene. The band defied convention by eschewing lowbrow aesthetics for artier and more experimental terrain. Over the years its sound morphed from terse blasts of angular guitar noise to stately electronic minimalism. Inspired by a successful reunion tour two years ago, Wire returns after more than a decade's absence, to reinterpret the short, fast songs of its heyday. Sept. 19 and Sept. 21-22: **Marianne Faithfull.** More than two decades after the exquisitely abrasive "Broken English" proved that she was something far more interesting than a former Rolling Stones groupie, Faithfull has maintained a semi-distinguished career as a raconteur and chanteuse. Her latest effort, "Kissin Time," features collaborations with Beck, Billy Corgan, and Pulp's Jarvis Cocker. Sept. 24: The glistening neo-psychedelic art rock of the **Super Furry Animals,** a band out of Cardiff, Wales, which started its career singing in Welsh but has since converted to English in its conquest of the British charts.

Linton Kwesi Johnson, at the Roxy.

JOE CIARDIELLO

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 21-22: **Gogol Bordello** is a musical conflagration so dizzying that it found itself in an unlikely spot earlier this year—the Whitney Biennial. An amorphous collective of frenzied players led by the ringmaster Eugene Hütz, Gogol meshes together elements of Ukrainian folk, Russian wedding music, punk rock, flamenco, and surreal cabaret songs. They are swiftly becoming local legends, thanks to their rowdy performances that leave all participants dazed and drained.

MERCURY LOUNGE

217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Sept. 20: An evening of alternative country with **Laura Cantrell** and **Robbie Fulks.** Sept. 22: While the loss of **Jay Bennett** doesn't seem to have hurt Wilco, the guitarist suffers as a solo artist. On "The Palace at 4 A.M.," his new album, recorded with his longtime friend **Edward Burch,** the instrumental sections stand out more than the songs themselves.

S.O.B.'S

204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Sept. 19: Born Otis Jackson, Jr., **Madlib** is one of the most talented musicians in underground hip-hop. In addition to being a master turntablist, he also raps as the helium-voiced Quasimoto and records jazz with Yesterday's New Quintet. He appears here as part of the Stones Throw tour, named after the record label started by collaborator **Peanut Butter Wolf,** who will also be packing records. Sept. 22: The accomplished and erratic hip-hop group **Non-Phixion.** After creating a stir a few years ago with brilliant early singles and an album on the indie-rock label Matador, the group dropped out of sight; they've recently returned with their first full-length release, "The Future Is Now."

WARSAW

261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-5252)—Sept. 19: Many minefields await celebrity bands. The models and actors in **Phantom Planet** emerged unscathed, perhaps because they were playing together long before the drummer, Jason Schwartzmann, starred in "Rushmore" and the singer, Alex Greenwald, landed a role in "Donnie Darko." The result is pleasant pop-rock, with tinges of real craftsmanship. Sept. 24: **Pere Ubu,** the longtime trailblazers of the American underground, developed their signature avant-garage sound in Cleveland, Ohio, during the mid-seventies. They've remained a low-key but tremendously influential band ever since.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Sept. 19-21: **Ron Carter** may be the world's most famous jazz bassist, but being a perennial gun for hire has never been enough for him. A fine composer and a crafty bandleader—the nucleus of the celebrated band Sphere was once his rhythm section—Carter is now leading a nonet, which should provide him with all the tonal coloring he needs to present his case as a significant artist. Dining.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL

237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Sept. 19: The funk will be flying as the guitarist **Charlie Hunter** shares a bill with **Christian Logic** featuring super-bassist Christian McBride, DJ Logic, and the legendary drummer Bernard Purdie. Sept. 21: **Sonny Rollins** has been called the world's greatest improvising musician, and on a good night you just might believe it. On a not so good night, the tenor saxophonist still has his vaunted tone to fall back on. It's a risk worth taking.

BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Sept. 22: Defying the effects of time with impunity, the extraordinary drummer **Elvin Jones** turns seventy-five. The still-dexterous and inventive percussionist and his Jazz Machine ensemble greet saxophonist **Ravi Coltrane,** who will assist in a tribute to his father, and Jones's former employer, John Coltrane.

BOTTOM LINE

15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Sept. 19: **Branford Marsalis.** In his latest release, "Footsteps of Our Fathers," the saxophonist takes on works by John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, and Ornette Coleman. Judging from the seriousness of his intentions and his commanding technique, Marsalis is no longer rebelling against the jazz establishment. In fact, he now seems as obsessed with tradition as his younger brother Wynton.

CARLYLE HOTEL

Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and the magnetic "42nd Street" veteran **Christine Ebersole,** whose repertoire ranges from Judy Garland to Joni Mitchell. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, the **Loston Harris** trio holds forth through Dec. 31.

CORNELIA STREET CAFÉ

29 Cornelia St. (989-9319)—Sept. 22: The **Sean Smith** quartet. The bassist Smith has spent the better part of the past two decades providing first-rate support for others—it's time he stepped out on his own. He's been steadily building both a strong book of original pieces and a firm rapport with the saxophonist Allen Mezquida.

IRIDIUM

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Sept. 22: **Ray Barretto** is a *conguero* for all seasons; his neo-salsa bands invariably have the New York mix in just the right proportions—two pinches of Latin to one of jazz and a dusting of funk. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ GALLERY

290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (242-1063)—Sept. 21: **Eric Revis,** the bassist of choice for Branford Marsalis and others, steps out on his own with a quintet.

JAZZ STANDARD

116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Proof that jazz is in the midst of a golden age for pianists is offered at this weeklong mini-festival. Four younger giants-in-the-making and one older master are each given one night to shine. The youthful four include **Ethan Iverson** on Sept. 17, **Vijay Iyer** on Sept. 19, **Matthew Shipp** on Sept. 20, and **Jason Moran** on Sept. 21. The established stylist **Fred Hersch** appears on Sept. 18. Dining.

NEUE GALERIE

1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (994-9493)—Sept. 20: **Ute Lemper** begins a three-Friday run here. Smart, sexy, and so in control of an audience that resistance to her icy charms is next to impossible, Lemper displays the kind of vocal strength and interpretive imagination that just aren't found in the vast majority of cabaret artists. She brings the same focus and intensity to songs by Kurt Weill as she does to such contemporary composers as Tom Waits and Elvis Costello.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Sept. 22: The **Ted Nash** quintet. The shrewd, ever-adventurous composer and saxophonist Nash, a linchpin of the Jazz Composer's Collective, leads a quintet featuring Nathalie Bonin on violin, Bill Schimmel on accordion, Wycliffe Gordon on tuba and trombone, and Matt Wilson on drums. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Gauguin in New York Collections: The Lure of the Exotic"** crowds the downstairs of the Robert Lehman wing with a few familiar masterpieces—the Met's "Ia Orana Maria (Hail Mary)," the Albright-Knox's "Manao Tupapau (Spirit of the Dead Watching)"—and many lesser paintings, drawings, sculptures, prints, documents, and oddities (portrait ceramic vessels, a carved walking stick representing a serpent and a wooden shoe). Saluting the Empire State's ravenous hunger for Gauguin, the unchoosy mélange affords a pungent sense of the artist's uneven, seductive mojo. Through Oct. 20. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)

33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City. (708-9480)—The museum's new home, until 2005, opens with a slew of shows perfect for its big warehouse of a space, including the ongoing **"To Be Looked At: Painting and Sculpture from the Collection."** (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—The museum's expansions have failed in some places (SoHo) and succeeded mightily in others (Bilbao). Perhaps in reaction to this, the newest item on the roster—an exhibition partnership with St. Petersburg's State Hermitage

Even for Drs. Schwartz and Kalet, two people familiar with the fragile biology of humans, the inevitable can be an unpleasant subject. Nevertheless, they know **the life cycle can be hard to predict** and the unthinkable is always a possibility. And they wanted to make sure the ones closest to them would be provided for. That's why they added life insurance from TIAA (part of the TIAA-CREF group) to their portfolio. Then they got back to thinking about the *life* part instead of the *insurance* part.

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Drs. Schwartz and Kalet were issued life insurance from Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association (TIAA) in 1990. TIAA-CREF Life Insurance Company, New York, NY, and TIAA issue life insurance policies. TIAA-CREF Individual and Institutional Services, Inc., and Teachers Personal Investors Services, Inc., distribute securities products. This is a paid endorsement. ©2002 Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association–College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF), New York, NY.

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Museum and Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum—tries a different strategy: doing much with little. **"Connecting Museums"** is the first foray into shows that share collections, and it includes only three paintings: Velázquez's 1654 portrait "Infanta Margarita Teresa in a Pink Gown," from the Hermitage; "Portrait of Baertje Martens," from 1640, one of the Rembrandts in the Kunsthistorisches Museum collection; and the museum's own "Before the Mirror," by Manet, from 1876. Pampered princess, sturdy bourgeoise, and anonymous courtesan—the wildly varied visions of three masters are presented as a mini-history of European portraiture, from Velázquez's depiction of distant majesty to Rembrandt's psychologically acute contemplation of the middle class to Manet's secret glimpse of a demimondaine's back. Through Oct. 20. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Joan Mitchell, the long-underrated second-generation Abstract Expressionist who died in 1992 at her home near Monet's Giverny, spoke paint. A sumptuous retrospective confirms her as a major artist. Mitchell's varieties of abstract landscape conjure nature (including the difficult human kind, in ornery and exacerbated moods) out of pigmented stuff with authoritative abandon. Lessons from Pollock, de Kooning, and, yes, Monet are apparent but thoroughly subsumed. As with great Monets, you sometimes can't tell what you are looking at. It's paint, sure, but as a medium of metaphysical mystery. Through Sept. 29. ♦ **"Visions from America: Photographs from the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1940-2001."** Through Sept. 22. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

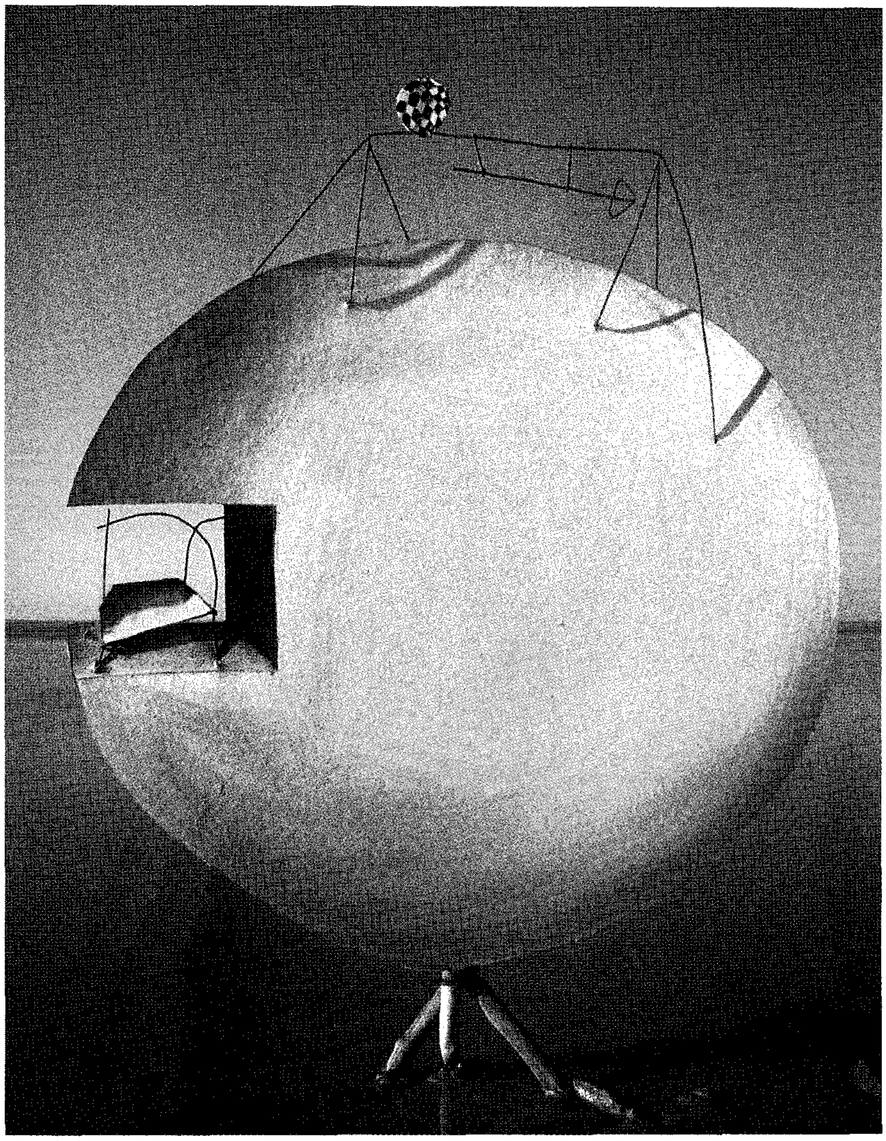
BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Exposed: The Victorian Nude,"** from Tate Britain, is a strong historical show about an era when jumpiness about sex had bizarre effects in art. Literary and classical themes provided the alibis for displaying naked females. Popular guises included Shakespearean fairies, virtuous heroines (Lady Godiva rides again, and again), Roman decadents, and the like. (One understands John Ruskin's wedding-night shock: according to British painters of the time, all ladies' pudenda are baby-bottom sleek.) For male nakedness, the excuse was propaganda for robust healthiness. Lust lurked, and smut reigned. A hand-colored Lewis Carroll photograph of a young girl posed as a Titian Venus leaves an exceptionally dire aftertaste. In this context, the finicky sensuality of the Pre-Raphaelites looks heroic. A turn toward frankness around the turn of the century—in the gloomy nudes of Walter Sickert and the too little known William Orpen—offers a fresh invention: actual people. Orpen's felicitously titled "The English Nude" (1900), a Rembrandtesque tour de force, presents a regular, interesting woman on a rumpled bed. Its mystery is that of really lived life. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

AVIGDOR ARIKHA
Oils, drawings, and pastels by the Paris-based artist. Through Oct. 5. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900.)

TREY FRIEDMAN
Friedman's paintings of pensive girls lolling in autumn leaves or getting dressed in the back seat of a car are beautifully made, in a sharp-focus, unapologetic, neo-academic style. At once dry and lush, they tap a familiar vein of suburban melancholy. Friedman's blond heroine could be the sister of Mena Suvari from "American Beauty," or maybe the daughter of Andrew Wyeth's Helga—relocated to Westchester but loyal to the family tradition of dour, gorgeous listlessness. Through Sept. 28. (David Findlay, Jr., 41 E. 57th St. 486-7660.)



"La Méthode #51, 2001," by Laurent Millet, at Mann (see Photography).

LAURENT MILLET/COURTESY OF ROBERT MANN GALLERY

TOLAND GRINNELL
"A Mobile Home & Other Necessities," a suite of elaborately impractical luxury items, including a thirty-four-piece luggage set that includes His and Her sinks and a portable wine cellar. Through Oct. 19. (Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929.)

SOL LE WITT
LeWitt's "wall drawings"—murals generated by written instructions—keep getting wilder, as if the Conceptualist were intent on trashing his own reputation for cerebral cool. But, as always, it turns out that he has just raised the stakes in his game. The gallery walls bear flat acrylic renderings of huge 3-D geometric forms: blocky "L" and "U" shapes and asymmetrical gridded layouts. At first, shrieking primary and secondary colors blast the eye, but after a few minutes they become almost restful, as you adjust to the pitch of their uniform intensity. The works suggest resurrected, brassy styles of the nineteen-sixties—Pop, Op, hard-edge, "Primary Structures," and supergraphics—which were eclipsed by more fashionable minimalist sobriety like LeWitt's. Through Oct. 12. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

MARYAN
Paintings, works on paper, and linoleum cuts by the Polish artist and Holocaust survivor, born Pinchas Burstein, whose work appeared in the 1969 Whitney show "Human Condition/Personal Torment." Through Oct. 12. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 861-7338.)

ANDREW MASULLO
Sprightly, colorful abstract works full of disarmingly immediate graphic pleasantries. Through Oct. 19. (Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780.)

ALIX PEARLSTEIN
This striking two-channel video by a conceptual artist with an eye for Pop lies somewhere between Ingmar Bergman and Buster Keaton. At first the sequences, projected on opposite walls, seem identical, but careful viewing reveals action shot from separate, if very similar, perspectives. Four characters—their ages and outfits suggest a father, mother, son, and daughter—interact without speaking in a blank white space. The parents threaten and adore, the children mock and emulate. The group's isolation heightens the psychological intensity, and the substitution of canned sound effects for dialogue provides an antic spin. Through Oct. 5. (Artemis Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444.)

RAY SMITH
Hawks and doves alike will be confused by this show in which the painter abandons his signature magic realism and instead presents works depicting either American military iconography or run-down homes in Kansas. The centerpiece is a sixteen-foot painting of two aircraft carriers shown in mirror image (think Rumsfeld's Rorschach test). The glitz of the war-related pictures, which also include kaleidoscopic, digitally manipulated photographs of gunboats and a painting of a torpedo bathed in golden light, is far more appealing than the drab gray of the houses, which undercuts whatever po-

litical statement Smith may be attempting. Through Oct. 5. (Ramis Barquet, 41 E. 57th St. 644-9090.)

"THE HEAVENLY TREE GROWS DOWNWARD"
Complicated decorative painting by three painters, Harry Smith, Fred Tomaselli, and Phillip Taaffe, who share an interest in alchemy, folklore, psychoactive plants, and other neurostimulants. Through Oct. 19. (James Cohan, 41 W. 57th St. 755-7171.)

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

DIANA COOPER
Cooper's new show includes her most purely architectural work so far, a six-foot-tall freestanding space-age doll house. From the back, you can peer into rooms full of intricate, inexplicable ministructures that would have delighted Jack Kirby or Saul Steinberg. The other novelty is Cooper's use of photographs: a series of snapshots of an airplane's wing, for example, provide an unexpected glimpse of autobiographical (or at least real-world) imagery. Most of the time, though, Cooper remains firmly ensconced in her own universe, an Arcadia of proliferating conduits, pompom chutes, and foam-core follies. Through Oct. 12. (Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.)

ANN CRAVEN
Large-scale paintings of birds—yellow canaries so pumped up they could be busted for steroids, lovebirds with feathers the color of cotton candy—that owe less to Audubon than they do to a rack of kitschy postcards. In each canvas the fauna (the main gallery's aviary is preceded by several deer) is lavishly painted in sharp focus, while the floral background (which might have been swiped from a wallpaper sample) is blurred. This tension between nature and artifice suggests that Craven is staking some conceptual claim. But ultimately the show's pleasure lies in its unabashed decorative oomph. Through Oct. 5. (Gasser & Grunert, 524 W. 19th St. 807-9494.)

RUSSELL CROTTY
In this charming walk-in solar system of a show, the artist, an amateur astronomer, mounts elaborate ballpoint-pen drawings of night skies on large Lucite spheres that dangle from the ceiling like wayward planets. (The drawings are based on telescopic observations Crotty made from his homemade observatory in Malibu.) Some are explicitly pictorial, like the ring of ponderosas that form a panorama below a speckled expanse of the Milky Way. In others, the detail has an all-over obsessive quality that suggests a science experiment by a maniacal minimalist. Through Oct. 26. (CRG, 535 W. 22nd St. 229-2766.)

JAMES HYDE
Inventive works, in cast glass, fresco, papier-mâché, and nylon strapping, displayed on floor, wall, ceiling, and, in one case, inflated until the piece fills the room. Through Oct. 5. (Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 929-2262.)

MIKI LEE
Paintings made of vertical stripes of inch-wide zigzags, in a startling array of complementary color groups that suggest emotional or meditative states. Through Oct. 5. (Lyonswier, 511 W. 25th St. 242-6220.)

MICHEL MAJERUS
Paintings in mix-and-match styles chosen from popular culture and art history (e.g., Space Invaders and Frank Stella), by the Berlin-based artist. Through Oct. 19. (Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 680-9467.)

JOHN MORRIS
More than a hundred drawings made with carefully built-up surfaces of wax crayon, acrylic, ink, graphite, gesso, and ballpoint pen. Through Oct. 5. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460.)

ELLIOTT PUCKETTE
In a Zen variation on a grade-school art-class technique (scratching black-crayon-covered paper to reveal colors layered underneath), Puckette scratches ink-washed canvases to reveal layers of white. Her undulating, sassily flouncing lines mimic milk swirling in coffee, smoke rising, and clouds moving—the artist cites Constable's skies as an influence. Their curvy, razor-incised calligraphy can also look, up close, like Arabic or a colorful John Cage score, though it is Puckette's great pleasure to mimic the conventions of script without actually offering anything to read. Through Oct. 12. (Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 26th St. 563-4474.)

KARIM RASHID
"Mutablob" sculptures and related digital paintings and ceramics. Through Oct. 5. (Gering, 534 W. 22nd St. 646-336-7183.)

SCOTT RICHTER
Richter's earlier "paint tables" were just that—steel tables piled high with foot-thick mounds of glistening, viscous oil paint. These new works carry their comic materialism in various directions: onto the wall, for instance, where sloppy gloomphs of pigment resemble books, sandwiches, and a kind of oleaginous masonry. But the highlights are two new paint tables, sliced to create luminous walls of sunset and landscape color. They suggest a collaboration between Richard Serra, Frederick Church, and a Carvel cake. Through Oct. 5. (Harris, 529 W. 20th St. 463-9666.)

JULIA SCHER
An installation made up of security blankets, surveillance equipment, and high-tech plastics. Through Oct. 12. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

AS FOUR
Sculpture, paintings, fashion, and performances by the fashion collective. Through Sept. 21. (Deitch Projects Annex, 18 Wooster St. 343-7300.)

JOHN BISBEE
In this Greenwich Village gallery's inaugural exhibition, the Maine native John Bisbee welds three tons of twelve-inch steel spikes into three discrete pieces. Two of them, a collection of ten spheres and a two-hundred-and-fifty-five-foot undulating line of spikes placed business end down, show off their clean geometry. The strongest work, "Stick," a dense, hulking carcass of end-to-end, off-kilter welds, creates a rough, human, and menacing presence that banishes any whiff of minimalist sterility. Through Oct. 4. (Plane Space, 102 Charles St. 917-606-1268.)

CHUCK CONNELLY
Richly colored paintings of Philadelphia and other scenes. Through Oct. 12. (Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. 941-0012.)

RICHARD WOODS
For "Super Tudor," the artist has given the gallery a new Tudor-style exterior, covered the floors with mock parquetry, painted the walls with floor-to-ceiling parrot prints, and hung up an indiscriminate mix of supersized frames, wood-shop versions of art-history images, and such decorative wall coverings as a rainbow trout or a pretty señorita. Garden-store sculptures—Michelangelo's "David," the "Venus de Milo"—sit in tubs of water that recirculates almost at random out of holes in their anatomy. Once upon a time, setups like this, with their reflexive institutional critique, felt a little snarky; this just looks like a fond, vibrant exaggeration of suburban pretension. Smaller target, bigger smiles. Through Oct. 19. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

HARRY CALLAHAN
There are only sixteen images here, by a pioneer of color photography who remains better known for his poignant black-and-white streetscapes and prayerful nudes. The subjects are no different, but with the addition of color there's a pop to his surrealist multi-exposures and collages. Callahan's back in familiar territory with "Cape Cod": a tone study of grays and blues, depth and surface, that looks marvellously strange. Through Oct. 12. (Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

LEE FRIEDLANDER
When Friedlander began to shoot landscapes, he traded his streetwise Leica for a square-format Hasselblad. But he doesn't follow the example of Ansel

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Adams and Edward Weston—he refuses to treat the American wilderness as an icon. Typical of his studies in composition is "Canyon de Chelly, 1998," which puts standard Adams fare (a lichen-stained monolith) in the foreground, then packs the rest of the frame with a graphic abundance of striated cliffside, headlong rushes of trees, rockslide, and cloud. "Oregon, 1997" presents another outdoor piety (the sheer wall of rock), but stone has never been possessed by such a spirit of nervous energy. Through Oct. 11. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166.)

LAURENT MILLET
If Paul Klee and Alexander Calder got together to make photographs, the results might look something like the whimsical idylls created by the French photographer Laurent Millet. Sculpture is set up and photographed outside, often standing in shallow water. Millet's surreal and fragile beach contraptions—such as "La Méthode #43," a circle of orange wired to yellow sticks, all teetering under a cardboard sail—might not last long, but the photographs have a tactile life of their own. Through Oct. 26. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 989-7600.)

EUGENE RICHARDS
Richards is arguably the most empathetic photographer working when it comes to showing the hard parts of people's lives. His record of his wife's fight with and death from breast cancer and his chronicles of inner-city drug users (collected in the books "Exploding Into Life" and "Cocaine Blue, Cocaine True") are harrowing and extraordinarily frank. Immediately after the attacks of September 11th, Richards hit the streets, visited people's homes, and attended funerals in search of images that might document the violence and loss that affected so many people that day. Once again, Richards has wrought a personal elegy for those who are just learning to cope with what has happened to them. Through Oct. 2. (Open Mondays through Fridays.) (Aperture/Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555.)

JOEL-PETER WITKIN
Witkin, who traces his interest in photography in part to a childhood stare-down with a decapitated head (it rolled onto his lawn during an auto accident), continues his work in the field of severed limbs and third nipples. His first New York solo show since a 1995 Guggenheim retrospective includes preliminary drawings and comparatively rare hand-colored work, along with his signature labor-intensive black-and-white prints. The connection to art history is as strong as ever, with one brief digression from European painting into commercial animation—"Humor and Fear," in which Witkin draws Mickey Mouse ears on a model without feet or fingers. Through Oct. 12. (Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819.)

Short List

DAVID LA CHAPPELLE / DENNIS HOPPER
Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300. Through Sept. 21.

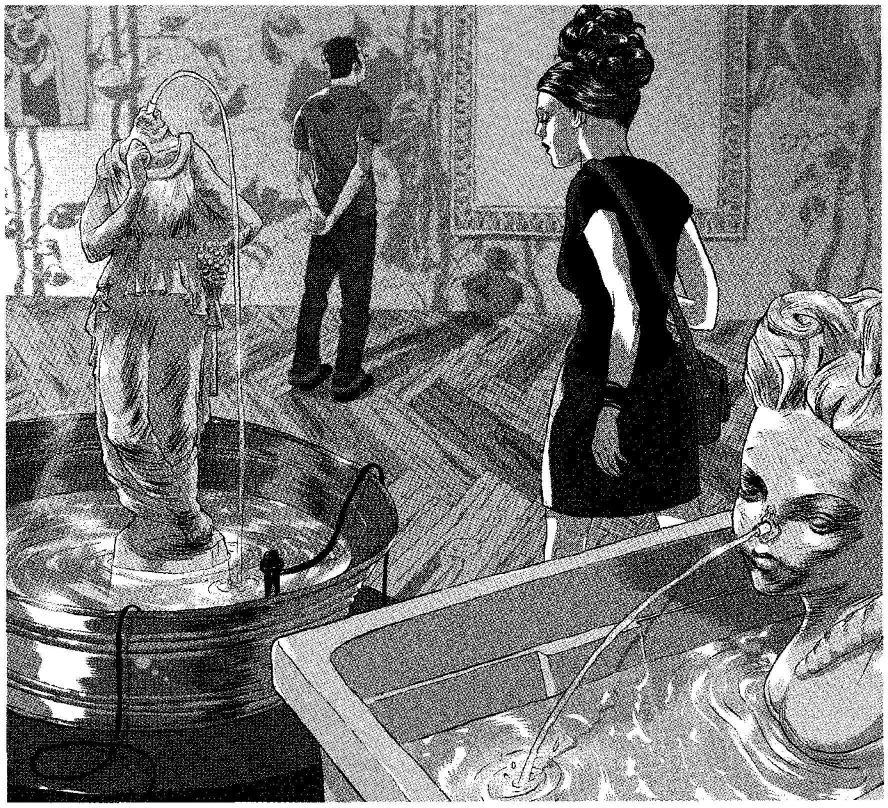
ANNEÈ OLAFSSON
Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 680-9889.
Through Oct. 5.

JAMES VAN DER ZEE
Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082.
Through Nov. 2.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Asian Week kicks off the new season. Sept. 19 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Chinese ceramics and works of art. The morning session, concentrating on antiquities, includes such items as a marble group of a mother and child, from the Tang dynasty; ceramics, paintings, and furniture, from the Song dynasty to the nineteenth century, are featured in the afternoon. ♦ Sept. 20 at 10:15 A.M.: Art from India and Southeast Asia, including Hindu and Buddhist antiquities and modern Indian paintings. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Sept. 18 at 10 A.M.: A sale of Japanese prints and paintings, from a private collection. ♦ Sept. 18 at 11 A.M. and 2: More Japanese art, including a complete set of prints of Hiroshige's "Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido." ♦ Sept. 18 at 4:30: Korean art. A copper-red *maebyong* from the Koryo dynasty, estimated to bring up to a million dollars, is a highlight of the sale. ♦ Sept. 19 at 10 A.M. and 2: Indian and Southeast Asian art, featuring a selection of stupas, a Tibeto-Chinese *kesi* tanka from the fifteenth century, and a number of modern Indian paintings. ♦ Sept. 20 at 10 A.M.: Classical Chinese furniture from the collection of Dr. S. Y. Yip. ♦ Sept. 20 at 11 A.M. and 2: Chinese archaic bronzes, ceramics, and works of art, including a selection of scholars' rocks. ♦ Sept. 24 at 10 A.M.: Part II of the detective-fiction library of Dr. Richard M. Lackritz, featuring first editions of books by Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Agatha Christie, and other masters of the form. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)



"Super Tudor," Richard Woods's lively satire of renovations, at Deitch Projects.

TOMER HANUKA

SWANN
Sept. 18 at 3: A hundred works on paper by such artists as Malevich and Picasso. ♦ Sept. 19 at 10:30 A.M. and 2:30: Prints and drawings from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

THE FALL FAIR
The début season for a new show of fine and decorative art works and antiques, offered by seventy-five international dealers. (Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. Sept. 19-23. For more information, call 800-423-7469.)

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METROPOLITAN OPERA
With Luciano Pavarotti quickly fading from the scene, Plácido Domingo is the world's last remaining tenor superstar—a part-time job he gloriously fulfills when he isn't busy running two of America's major opera houses. He's the star of the Met's opening-night gala, in which he'll sing excerpts from three of his favorite operas: Act II of **"Fedora,"** Act II of **"Samson et Dalila,"** and Act IV of **"Otello."** Mirella Freni, Olga Borodina, and Renée Fleming, respectively, are his leading ladies, with Dwayne Croft, Sergei Leiferkus, and Juan Pons also appearing; Jean-Yves Thibaudet makes a cameo appearance as the Polish pianist in "Fedora." James Levine conducts. (Sept. 23 at 7.) ♦ Franco Zeffirelli's production of **"Turandot,"** once criticized for its gaudy portrayal of imperial Peking, has long since become a mainstay of the house: it provides an accessible glamour that can dazzle an audience way up into the cheap seats. It helps, of course, that Puccini's opera, monumental even in its intimate moments, is an indestructible vehicle for powerhouse voices. The cast includes Andrea Gruber (in the title role), Hei-Kyung Hong, Vladimir Galouzine, and Hao Jiang Tian; Carlo Rizzi conducts. (Sept. 24 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
"Don Giovanni," with Mel Ulrich (in the title role), Pamela Armstrong, Marquita Lister, Rinat Shaham, John Tessier, and Kevin Burdette; George Manahan conducts. (Sept. 18 at 7:30, Sept. 20 at 8, and Sept. 22 at 1:30.) ♦ Puccini's rarely performed triptych of short operas, **"Il Trittico,"** has always seemed to work better in pieces than as a whole, largely because the pieces express such sharply different stylistic interests. James Robinson's production sensibly makes no attempt at unity and gives each work its full due: penumbral, sweaty realism for the visceral melodrama of "Il Tabarro"; cool clarity for the sentimental piety of "Suor Angelica"; Marx Brothers buffoonery (featuring a home-movie blowup of Florence) for the low high jinks of "Gianni Schicchi." A brilliant array of young singers—notably, Fabiana Bravo, Carl Tanner, Maria Kanyova, Ursula Ferri, and, in the first and third operas, America's answer to Bryn Terfel, the booming Mark Delavan—blaze forth under the astute conducting of George Manahan. (Sept. 19 at 7:30.) ♦ Jake Heggie's **"Dead Man Walking"** was such a tumultuous success at its San Francisco Opera première, in 2000, that a New York production was inevitable; since it has a libretto by Terrence McNally (based on the memoir by Sister Helen Prejean, which also inspired the Tim Robbins movie), you could say the piece is coming home. City Opera presents it in a new staging by Leonard Foglia, with Joyce DiDonato, Sheryl Woods, and John Packard reprising

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his gripping San Francisco performance as Joseph De Rocher, the condemned man. The conductor is John DeMain. (Sept. 21 at 1:30.) ♦ City Opera's exquisite production of **"Madama Butterfly"** returns to the house, with Maria Gavrilova (in the title role), Mika Shigematsu, Scott Piper, and Charles Robert Stephens; Brent McMunn. (Sept. 21 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

AMATO OPERA
The East Village's feisty pocket opera company presents **"Madama Butterfly,"** directed and conducted by Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Sept. 21 at 7:30 and Sept. 22 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel begins his tenure as the orchestra's new music director with an opening-night gala concert. Maazel's technique is beyond reproach, but his sometimes wayward interpretations have always had detractors; now, at seventy-two, he has what may be his best chance to prove them wrong. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony should provide a fine opportunity; he'll be joined by the singers Marina Mescheriakova, Jill Grove, Michael Schade, and René Pape, assisted by the New York Choral Artists. The concert begins with the "Leonore" Overture No. 3. (Sept. 18 at 7:30.) ♦ For the rest of the week, the "Leonore" is replaced by a new work by John Adams, "On the Transmigration of Souls," co-commissioned by the Philharmonic and Lincoln Center to honor the victims of last year's terrorist attacks. Adams, wisely, hasn't attempted to re-create the tragedy in music but rather to develop "a meditative space" for each listener's emotions and memories, with texts taken from survivors' remembrances and a partial list of the victims; the scoring features two choruses (including the Brooklyn Youth Chorus, making its Philharmonic début) and interactive electronics. (Sept. 19 at 7:30 and Sept. 20-21 at 8.) ♦ With Thomas Studebaker and Peter Rose replacing Schade and Pape. (Sept. 24 at 7:30.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5656.)

MAAZEL/VILAR CONDUCTORS' COMPETITION
By happy coincidence, Lorin Maazel's ascendancy at the Philharmonic coincides with the final rounds of his international search for talented young conductors, supported by the philanthropist Alberto Vilar. As a prelude to the competition's concluding concerts, at the end of the month, each of the eight finalists will conduct the Orchestra of St. Luke's during two days of public rehearsals of Sibelius's First and Second Symphonies (some of the music with which Maazel first made his name). (Carnegie Hall. Sept. 23 at 9:30 A.M. and 2:30 and Sept. 24 at 9:30 A.M. and 2. A limited number of free tickets will be available at the box office on the day of each session.)

RECITALS

ARTEK
The early-music ensemble, led by the harpsichordist Gwendolyn Toth, performs a forty-minute concert of music from the Italian Baroque by Piccinini, Frescobaldi, and others. (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. Sept. 19 at 1:15. No tickets required.)

BARGEMUSIC
A new, younger crop of players joins the floating chamber-music series as of this month, beginning their tenure with a sequence of Beethoven programs. (The redoubtable Mark Peskanov, a mainstay on violin for many a season, sits in to add some seasoned experience.) Sept. 19-20 at 7:30: The pianist Adam Neiman and the cellist Edward Arron join Peskanov for a concert featuring the Cello Sonata in D Major, Op. 102, No. 2, and the Piano Trio in E-Flat Major, Op. 70, No. 2. ♦ Sept. 21 at 7:30 and Sept. 22 at 4: Two piano trios (including the "Archduke") and the Cello Sonata in A Major, Op. 69, played by the cellist Sophie Shao, the pianist Paul Ostrovsky, and Peskanov. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

ANDRÉ EMELIANOFF
The imaginative New York cellist coördinates a concert of music from France, Russia, and Brazil, with the pianist Sara Davis Buechner, the soprano Karen Clift (a velvet-toned Midwestern soprano who rarely alights on the East Coast), and the "Misterioso Cello Ensemble"—performing, of course, Villa-Lobos's "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5." Among the other works are cello sonatas by Debussy and Prokofiev, a new work, "Colors," by William Harvey (based on a poem by Yevtushenko), short works by Tchaikovsky and Taneyev, and a movement from Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time." (Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. Sept. 20 at 7. For information about tickets, call 973-669-0872.)

SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND
A brunchtime concert of Scarlatti, Chopin, and Beethoven, performed by the pianist Mei Ting Sun at Le Refuge, a French country-style inn on City Island. (620 City Island Ave., the Bronx. Sept. 22 at 12:30. For information about tickets, call 212-927-9194.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
The series, created as a memorial to the Jupiter Symphony's founder, Jens Nygaard, begins its fall season with music by Bach, Brahms (the Clarinet Quintet, featuring the clarinettist Vadim Lando), and Fritz Kreisler's Quartet in A Minor—the kind of "forgotten" Romantic work that Nygaard liked to promote. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 799-1259. Sept. 23 at 2 and 8.)

MUSIC BY LOUIS KARCHIN
A fiftieth-birthday tribute to the composer, a longtime faculty member at N.Y.U. whose music has carried on the angular, modernist styles of Wolpe and late Stravinsky with a more lyrical, tonally colored bent. The Da Capo Chamber Players, the pianists Stephen Gosling and Marilyn Nonken, and the saxophonist Taimur Sullivan are among the artists taking part in a concert of chamber music and songs (including the première of "Voyages," for alto sax and piano). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 24 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

BROOKLYN MURAL BIKE TOUR
Groundswell Community Mural Project, a nonprofit group that helps young people lawfully turn blank neighborhood walls into vibrant expressions of their inner creativity, is sponsoring a two-wheeled tour of its murals in Prospect Heights, Red Hook, and Sunset Park. (Sept. 22 at 2. For more information, call 718-857-2990, ext. 38.)

READINGS
Sept. 18 at 7:30: The novelist Walter Mosley joins the poet Nicky Finney for a reading of their work. (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery. For more information, call 254-9628.) ♦ Sept. 18 at 8: Larry (Ratso) Sloman offers passages from "On the Road with Bob Dylan," his recently reissued account of Dylan's 1975 Rolling Thunder Revue tour. (Rocky Sullivan's, 129 Lexington Ave., near 28th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 24 at 8:30: The poets Derek Walcott and Adam Zagajewski read from their work. (Russian Samovar, 256 W. 52nd St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
Sept. 18 at 7:30: The author and neurologist Oliver Sacks interviews the Polish writer Ryszard Kapuściński. (Hemmerdinger Hall, New York University Main Building, 100 Washington Sq. E. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 18 at 6: Johnny Kucks, the winning pitcher in the New York Yankees' 1956 Game 7 World Series victory over the Brooklyn Dodgers, recalls what it was like to play alongside Mickey Mantle, Yogi Berra, Phil Rizzuto, and Don Larsen. (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. 817-8215.) ♦ Sept. 18 at 8: The former New York City Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen talks with the editor Judith Regan about his new memoir, "Strong of Heart: Life and Death in the Fire Department of New York." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Alternate Americas

TONY MILLIONAIRE

Sarah Vowell, a contributing editor to "This American Life," on National Public Radio, knows that she's not a fair-weather patriot—at least not the kind Thomas Paine disparaged in the first installment of the "American Crisis" papers, which was written in the fall of 1776, when Washington's troops were retreating. But she can't get behind the idea of citizenship as sing-along that has been prevalent since September 11th. **THE PARTLY CLOUDY PATRIOT** (Simon & Schuster), her latest book, is a collection of radio segments and magazine pieces. Vowell, a charismatic misanthrope, repeats the mantra "We the people, we the people" to keep from freaking out on the humid, overstuffed subway. She also thinks about the Civil War "all the time, every day," vacations in Salem, and takes walking tours of Thomas Jefferson's Paris years. Fashioning herself as Clinton's "crabby little cheerleader," she admits a guilty pleasure in voting. Of the booth: "I love it in there. I drag it out, leisurely punching the names I want as if sipping whiskey in front of a fire."

Office workers with razor-sharp cheekbones, rep ties, and banker pens in David Rees's comic-strip collection **GET YOUR WAR ON** (forthcoming from Soft Skull Press) start their frame-to-frame phone conversations with lines like, "Hey buddy. How are you enduring your freedom?" First posted last October at www.mnftiu.cc, this strip finds exclamation-happy biz-school Everypeople swearing and boozing their way through the chaotic national events of the past year, with reactions ranging from calm ("I'm a little confused. Are U.S. citizens allowed to kill suspected terrorists now?") to excitable ("I want all my Americans who think this is our finest hour to just throw your hands in the air!").

—*Dana Goodyear*

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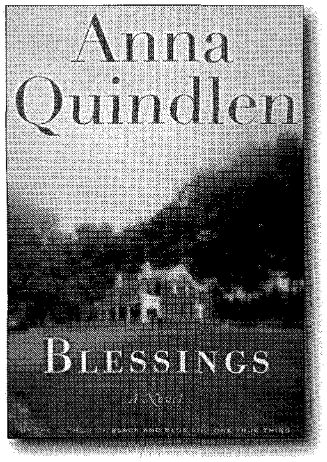
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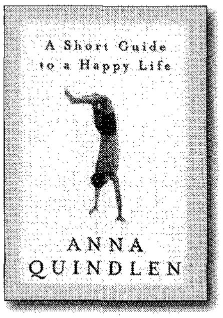
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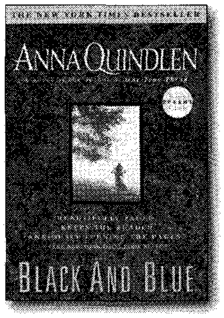
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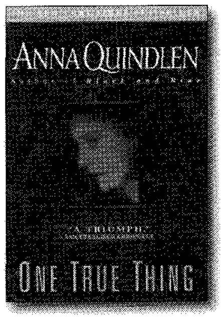
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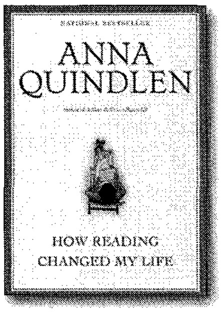
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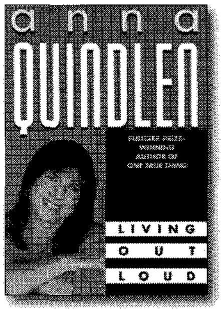
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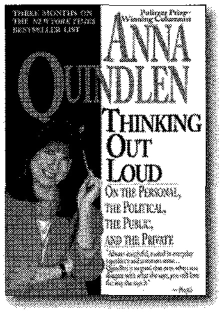
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MOVIES OPENING

BALLISTIC: ECKS VS. SEVER
Antonio Banderas and Lucy Liu play secret agents competing to find the makers of a microscopic injectable assassination device. Directed by Kaos. Opening Sept. 20.

THE BANGER SISTERS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 20.

DON'T ASK DON'T TELL
Doug Miles edited the 1954 B movie "Killers from Space," turning it into a satire about eliminating gays from the U.S. military. Opening Sept. 20. (Cinema Village.)

8 WOMEN
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Sept. 20.

DAS EXPERIMENT
A thriller in which a journalist (Moritz Bleibtreu) participates in a psychological research project that simulates prison conditions. In German. Opening Sept. 20. (Angelika Film Center.)

THE FOUR FEATHERS
A historical drama set in 1875 and directed by Shekhar Kapur ("Elizabeth"), which tells the story of a young British officer (Heath Ledger) in North Africa who rescues his besieged regiment. With Kate Hudson and Wes Bentley. Opening Sept. 20.

HIS SECRET LIFE
After her husband dies suddenly, a woman (Margherita Buy) discovers that he had a gay lover (Stefano Accorsi). Written and directed by Ferzan Ozpetek. In Turkish and Italian. Opening Sept. 20.

INVINCIBLE
Werner Herzog directed this drama based on the true story of Zishe Breitbart (Jouko Ahola), a Jewish blacksmith from Poland who performed as the world's strongest man in Berlin during the rise of the Nazi party. With Tim Roth. Opening Sept. 20.

SECRETARY
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 20. (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

SPIRITED AWAY
The latest *anime* adventure from Hayao Miyazaki ("Princess Mononoke"), in which a young girl discovers a world ruled by witches and monsters. Opening Sept. 20.

TRAPPED
A thriller in which a pair of criminals (Kevin Bacon and Courtney Love) kidnap the daughter of a wealthy couple (Charlize Theron and Stuart Townsend) and devise an elaborate plan to separate and extort them. Opening Sept. 20.

FILM NOTES

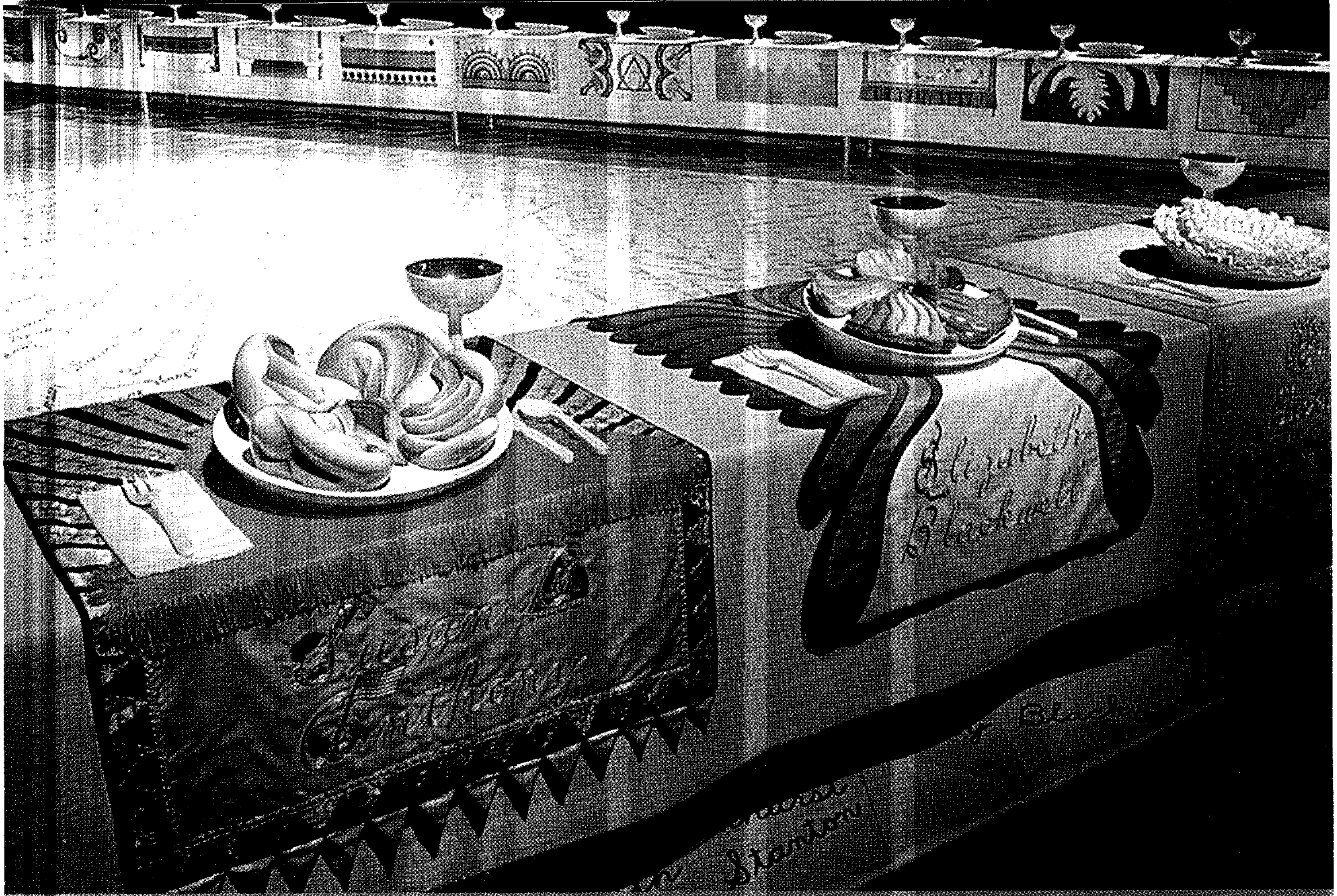
BARBERSHOP
A mellow, good-spirited comedy set on the South Side of Chicago, in which a restless young man (Ice Cube) comes to understand the value of his father's business. There's the college-educated barber (Sean Patrick Thomas), the rap-star barber (Eve), the gangster barber (Michael Ealy), the white b-boy barber (Troy Garity), and an old guy who plays checkers all day. These characters bounce off each other according to type, but every now and then someone gets off an original line. The most impressive performance is given by Cedric the Entertainer. Made up to look like a latter-day Frederick Douglass, he's a raspy-voiced sage unafraid to take down Rosa Parks, of all people. His rants get the whole shop up in arms, with everyone cracking wise.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

BLUE CRUSH
"Flashdance" with waves. A teen-ager (Kate Bosworth) from the wrong side of the tracks works hard to win a surfing competition and falls in love with a visiting N.F.L. player, learning a valuable lesson about empowerment in the process. The film, set in Hawaii, is basically a non-stop music video with some tired plotting thrown in. Not that this distracts in any way from the spectacularly shot surfing scenes (the sound design—crashing waves, giant swells—must be about the best ever recorded) and a cast (which includes Michelle Rodriguez and Sanoe Lake, among others) that's buffed, toned, and minimally clad for maximum viewing pleasure.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, and Union Square.)

CASQUE D'OR
Simone Signoret had her finest role (until "Room at the Top") as a gigolette with a glorious helmet of golden hair in Jacques Becker's sultry, poetic account of the Paris underworld in 1900. Her performance is a triumph of sensuality: faintly smiling, she is so intensely, ripely physical that she takes command of the screen. Becker introduces a world of cutthroats, apaches, and gun molls, and then subtly evokes an atmosphere that gives meaning and passion—and an overdose of doom—to their rivalries and intrigues. The love scenes between Signoret and Serge Reggiani are unusually simple and tender; perhaps because of this, the grim conclusion is almost insupportably painful. Originally released in 1952. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Sept. 21-22.)

CITY BY THE SEA
For long stretches, Robert De Niro, speaking in quiet, even tones, keeps this dolorous family melodrama on track. He plays Vincent LaMarca, a successful Manhattan homicide detective. His father was a convicted child murderer, and his son, Joey (James Franco), whom he hasn't seen in years, is a junkie living like a rat in an abandoned casino on the boardwalk of Long Beach, Long Island. As if all these troubles weren't enough, Joey kills a drug dealer in a fight, and then is suspected by the police of also killing a cop. Even though the story is based in fact, "City by the Sea" offers an almost grotesque pileup of tragedies. Will Vincent arrest his own son? Are the sins of the fathers visited upon the sons (or, in this case, grandsons)? Ken Hixon's screenplay lays in the Arthur Miller bricks very carefully. But when father and son get together at last, Hixon's writing falls into the turgid clichés of a TV drama. The end is a big letdown.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/9/02.) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

DODSWORTH
While other writers were turning out novels ridiculing American materialism and glorifying the expatriate existence, Sinclair Lewis conceived a businessman-hero and showed him to be a true dreamer, while his culture-mad wife, longing to be enriched by life in Europe, was a foolish horror. Sidney Howard made a play of Lewis's novel, and Walter Huston gave a legendary performance as the hero. He also stars in the 1936 movie version, which was produced by Sam Goldwyn with great care and taste; William Wyler is the director. There's only one problem, really, but it's central: the movie follows the stage version too closely. It looks programmed and underpopulated, though in an elegantly stylized way. Ruth Chatterton plays the wife and Mary Astor is the woman who appreciates Dodsworth's real value.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Sept. 18-19.)



HER ART GAVE WOMEN A PLACE AT THE TABLE

Judy Chicago

The Dinner Party

Brooklyn Museum of Art Sept 20, 2002 – Feb 9, 2003

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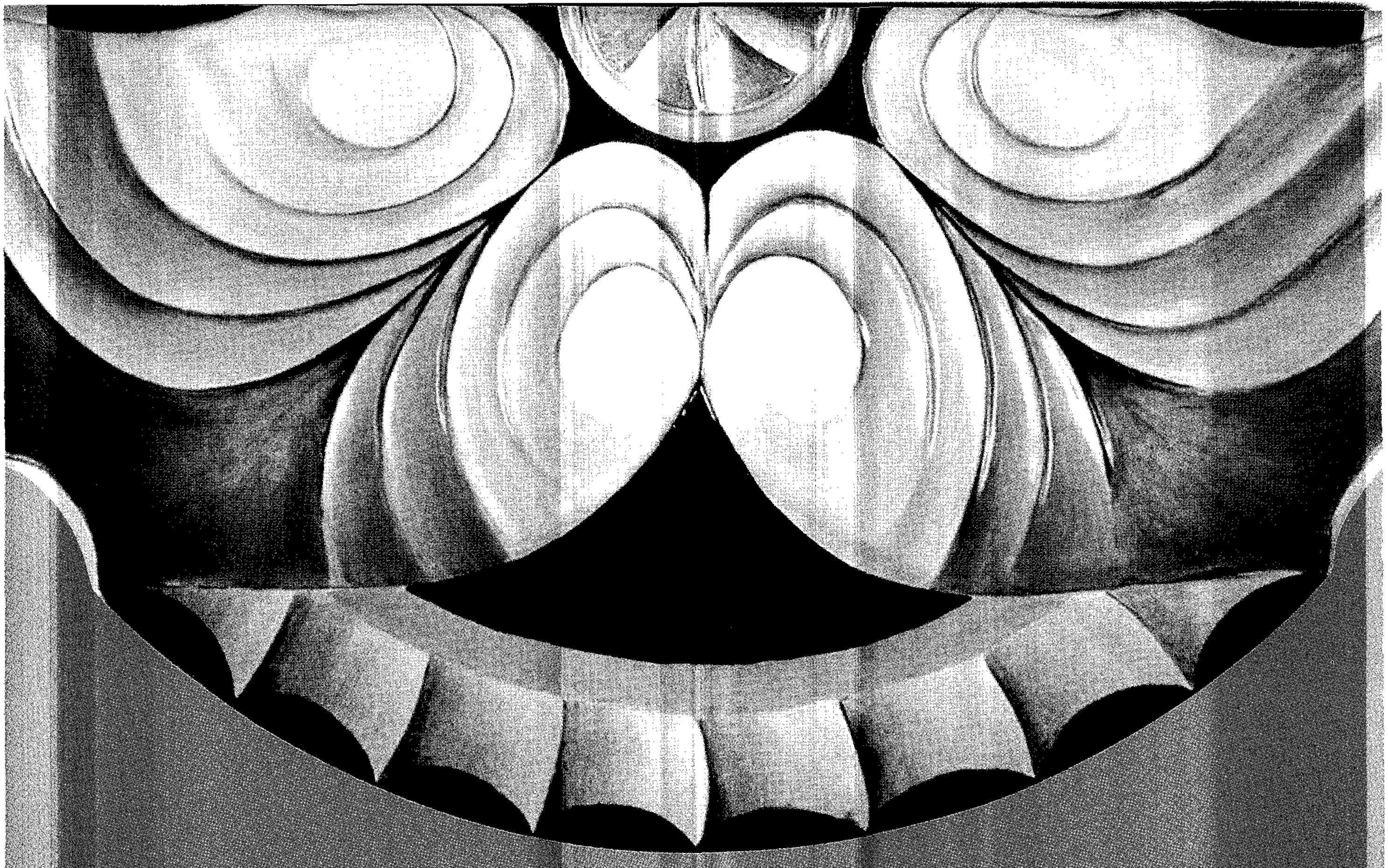
The Dinner Party (detail), 1979. Brooklyn Museum of Art Collection, Brooklyn, NY.



HER ART GAVE WOMEN
A PLACE AT THE TABLE

Judy Chicago

A Survey

National Museum of Women in the Arts Oct 11, 2002 – Jan 5, 2003
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Hypatia test plate (detail), from *The Dinner Party*, 1979. Courtesy of Flanders Contemporary Art.

8 WOMEN

François Ozon's new picture is a tonic of sorts, a hot-hued, postmodern, murder-mystery musical hen party. The setting is virginal and unashamedly fake—a snowbound house interrupted by the arrival of a horde of famous French actresses. The wisest way to list them without giving offense is alphabetically: Fanny Ardant, Emmanuelle Béart, Danielle Darrieux, Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Virginie Ledoyen, Firmine Richard, and Ludivine Sagnier. For sheer fetishistic whoopee, there is very little to rival the sight of Deneuve and Ardant getting into a catfight, all hisses and claws, and then sinking to the floor to stroke each other's whiskers. Ozon plainly worships the idea of the grand dame, and the movie allows him both to honor and deride his own devotion. There's lots of dancing, a striptease, and a surfeit of arch self-consciousness. Yet something of substance does creep through this concoction. In the competitive jostling of the women, we sense the eternal face-off of beauty against the beast of time. Nobody is more touching in this regard than Darrieux, her soft wrinkles unable to erode the exquisite heroines she once incarnated for Max Ophuls. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (9/16/02) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE GOOD GIRL

A comedy, darkly told, with a plot that never fails to attract: is there a way out of my narrow life? Jennifer Aniston puts on a Texas accent and plays Justine Last, a clerk at a faceless superstore, which seems to be the new epicenter of modern angst. Her co-workers include a sarcastic goth girl (Zooey Deschanel), a hyper-Christian security guard (Mike White), and a hunky, teen-age malcontent (Jake Gyllenhaal) who oh-so-subtly calls himself Holden. Soon, Justine and Holden are discovering the pleasures of the stockroom together. The movie is well acted and very funny about delusions, especially the writerly kind. It also complicates our loyalties by making Justine's husband (John C. Reilly) a decent, likable guy, even if he does smoke too much pot. Everything seems poised for a great finale, with the melancholic afterglow of a good Raymond Carver story. But the movie loses its tone—tragic moments, including a suicide, get treated in a flimsy way, and camp triumphs over content. Directed by Miguel Arteta and written by White.—*M.A.* (Angelika Film Center, Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, 62nd & Broadway, and 34th Street Theatre.)

IGBY GOES DOWN

A drama that treads deep into the heart of Salinger country: Kieran Culkin is Igby, late of military school, now sulking in Manhattan and running amok with his mother's credit card. Burr Steers, in his début as a writer-director, seems to remember only Holden Caulfield's alienation, and none of the self-scrutiny—the sense that rebellion is a pose like any other—which makes that novel more than just a kiss-off. The movie has a cold and sour take on the rich and feckless, and the decision to open the film with Igby and his brother (Ryan Phillippe) euthanizing their mother (Susan Sarandon) doesn't exactly leave a lot of room to maneuver. There are a few affecting scenes with Igby's mentally unstable father (Bill Pullman), but none of the nuanced emotional progression that the story needs to have genuine impact. With Claire Danes as a Bennington poetess and Amanda Peet as a SoHo mistress.—*M.A.* (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

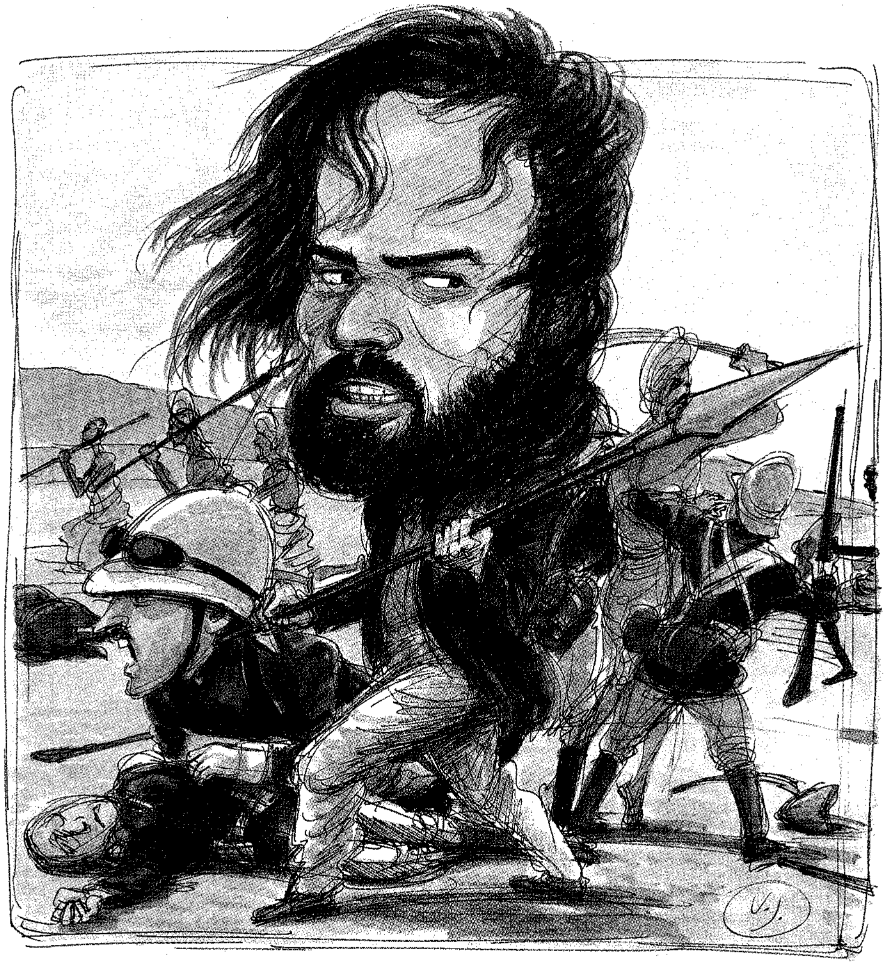
IN PRAISE OF LOVE

The new film from Jean-Luc Godard is carved into two halves. The first is in gliding, rapturous monochrome, the second in angry color, all the more jagged for being shot on digital video. From that contrast springs the whole endeavor. Godard is caught, as so often, between elegy and protest—between a lament for certain ideals, private and political, and splenetic digs at prevailing cultural conditions. There is a story—we follow a dour sort called Edgar (Bruno Putzulu), who is himself trying to cast a movie on the subject of changing love—but the narrative is so diluted that you can't help sensing Godard's indifference to the fates of his characters. Instead, his passion seems to be given over to chastising Hollywood for its abuse of history; America at large also takes a beating, apparently on the ground that the place is not old enough. (What exactly is any country supposed to do about that?) Yet the work, like most of Godard, asks to be seen; its strains of regret tug at you, and hang around in the mind, with a persistence rare in more coherent pictures. In French.—*A.L.* (9/2/02) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

VICTOR JUHASZ

THE LAST KISS

A superb, full-bodied Italian comedy written and directed by Gabriele Muccino. The movie is set in Rome, though it could take place in any large Italian city in which hip, good-looking young people work in a desultory way, cadge off their parents, go to weddings, hang out, and have sex a lot. As the characters long for more love and more freedom, the action is driven forward by a gliding camera that catches everyone in frenetic movement. The actors display prodigious gifts of temperament—that blessed absence of self-consciousness that links Italian opera to Italian comedy and makes so much French, English, and American work seem guarded or skittish by comparison. Muccino has a particular gift for lovers' quarrels, which he lets bloom into hilarious excess. In Italian.—*D.D.* (8/5/02) (Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)



Heath Ledger as a British army officer in "The Four Feathers."

THE LETTER

Bette Davis's forty-third movie; released in 1940, it marked her tenth year in films. She plays the wife of a rubber-plantation owner—a woman of such unimpeachable respectability that she can empty a gun into her lover and get away with it (in the courts, at least, because in Singapore the white ruling class must stick together). Davis gives what is very likely the best study of female sexual hypocrisy in film history. Cold and proper, she nonetheless manages to suggest the passion of a woman who'd kill a man for trying to leave her. She is helped by two unusually charged performances—James Stephenson as her lawyer and Herbert Marshall as her husband. The insistent music is pure, adulterated Max Steiner. It demeans William Wyler's clear, taut direction and the erotic awareness he brings to the material.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Sept. 20-21.)

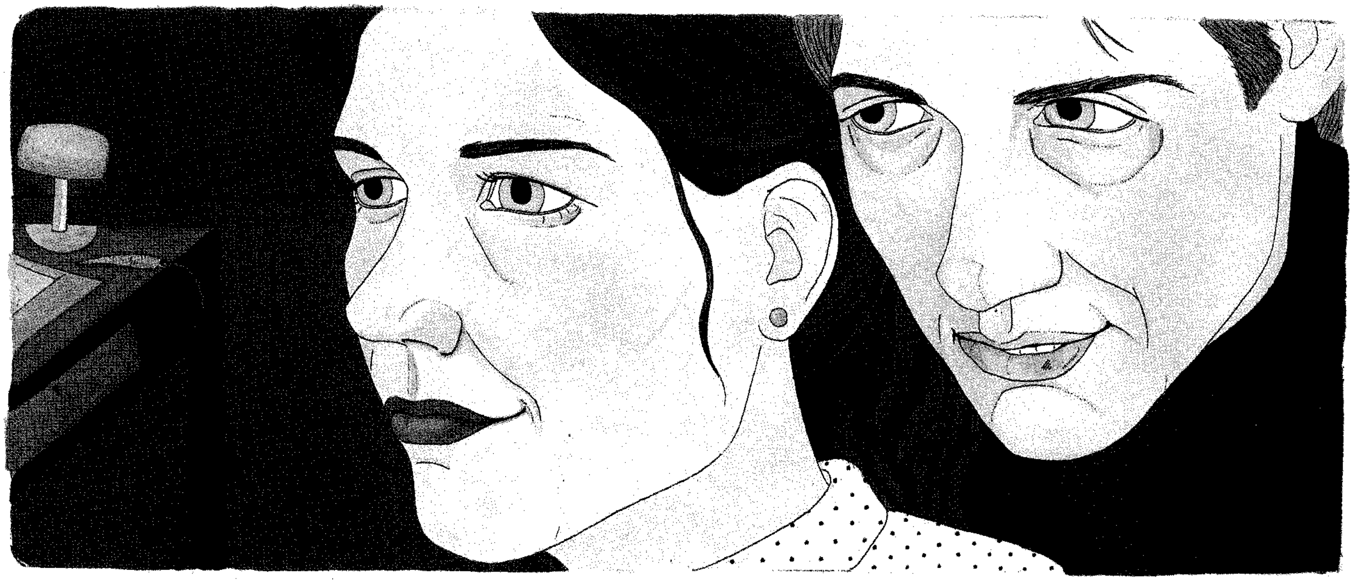
MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

ONE HOUR PHOTO

Robin Williams in serious mode, playing a nowhere man—Sy Parrish, the photo guy at the mall, who wears wire-frame glasses, a white shirt, and a tie clip that we're meant to take as a kind of emotional chastity belt. Sy becomes unhealthily obsessed with a young and beautiful suburban family—wayward father (Michael Vartan), good mom (Connie Nielsen), and adorable young son (Dylan Smith)—and plasters his wall at home with extra prints of their family snaps. Mark Romanek's psychological thriller features sterile white environments and lots of shots in which Williams is grimly isolated in sinister, hospital-like sets. The movie's experimental tone, however, doesn't disguise a rather low-grade and unpleasant form of suspense. Romanek is caught between making Sy dangerous and making him sympathetic, but any terror or pity we might feel gets crimped by the film's queasy narrative logic, which keeps us in the dark about Sy's nature right down to the unsatisfactory final scene.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

POSSESSION
Neil LaBute's adaptation of A. S. Byatt's novel is disappointingly tepid. Two contemporary literary scholars, a coldly composed British professor (Gwyneth Paltrow) and a scruffy American graduate student (Aaron Eckhart), discover a cache of secret letters exchanged by the great (fictional) Victorian poet Randolph Henry Ash (Jeremy Northam) and an intriguing (fictional) minor poet, Christabel LaMotte (Jennifer Ehle). As the scholars track down evidence of a passionate, illicit love affair between the two poets, they experience their own, neurotic version of love, and LaBute cuts back and forth between past and present. The period re-creation is faultless, and the narrative technique very smooth, but the movie never works up much fire. Eckhart gives his best movie performance yet, but you know a film is in trouble when it seems like a frigid version of "The French Lieutenant's Woman."—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)



LARA TOMLIN

Maggie Gyllenhaal and James Spader in "Secretary," a drama about an unconventional office romance, opening September 20.

SIGNS
A third attempt, on the part of M. Night Shyamalan, to disturb our sleep. This time we are in rural Pennsylvania, home to Graham Hess (Mel Gibson), who used to be a minister and is now a farmer; the story is designed to make him wonder if that was such a smart move. First come the crop circles, then glimpses of green men vanishing into the corn. Hess is skeptical, but his brother (Joaquin Phoenix) and children (Abigail Breslin and Rory Culkin) are more seriously spooked, and with good cause; soon enough, it becomes clear that aliens have landed all over the world in search of human beings and other comforting snacks. Shyamalan takes it easy on the special effects; much of the movie, which skirts dangerously close to the uneventful in its need to draw out the suspense, consists merely of the family sitting around watching TV or waiting for a claw under the door. The ending is far too freighted with spiritual intent, yet, as with "The Sixth Sense," you can neither ignore nor forget the mist of sickly unease, streaked with black humor, that rises out of the plot.—*A.L.* (8/12/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 2, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SIMONE
Silly, obvious, but entertaining. Viktor Taransky (Al Pacino), a bedraggled director of "art" films—a vain peacock with a broken tail—hasn't had a hit in ages when he accepts a gift from a dying computer nut: a synthesized female star, her existence confined to a hard disk. Simone (an amalgamation of "Simulation One") is tall, blond, tanned, and big-boned, with a wide mouth and a slightly muzzy voice. When Viktor feeds her into a romantic drama he's shooting, she becomes a sensation. What can Viktor do? He can't produce her for the public, so he tells everyone that she's reclusive, like Garbo, and creates ersatz interviews for the media. The premise is a little tired, but Viktor's desperate antics are quite funny, and Al Pacino, his hair standing up, his eyes glaring, has pulled off a dead-accurate imitation of the late John Cassavetes, a man who could be noble, manic, and full of it all at once. For the record, Simone is not a digital fabrication, but a Canadian model named Rachel Roberts. Written and directed by Andrew Niccol.—*D.D.* (9/9/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, and Union Square.)

24 HOUR PARTY PEOPLE
Tony Wilson, the Manchester music impresario who founded Factory records in the late seventies—home to Joy Division (later New Order) and Happy Mondays, among others—gets a fevered tribute in Michael Winterbottom's blast of a film. Wilson is played with a brilliant élan by British comic Steve Coogan—a standout performance that captures the dour enthusiasm of Wilson's genius. And Winterbottom's casting of the myriad musician roles is flawless; there isn't a hair style or a body type that seems out of place. The film's direction has the jittery anarchic feel of a good punk song, and the script displays a fast and free humor that indulges in the excesses of a rock-and-roll life.—*B.D.* (Empire 25, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

ALIAS BETTY
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Quad Cinema, and Sutton 1 and 2.

CHILDREN OF THE CENTURY
Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.

THE FAST RUNNER (ATANARJUAT)
59th Street East Cinema and Sunshine Cinema.

THE KID STAYS IN THE PICTURE
Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Empire 25.

METROPOLIS
The Screening Room.

MOSTLY MARTHA
Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, and Paris.

THE PINOCHET CASE
Film Forum.

ROAD TO PERDITION (7/15/02)
Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas.

SEX AND LUCIA
42nd Street E Walk and Sunshine Cinema.

STEALING HARVARD
Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

TADPOLE (7/29/02)
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, and Sunshine Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9385).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 29: "Master Class: The Art of Cinematography." Screenings, followed by a discussion with the film's cinematographer. Sept. 21 at 1: "Personal Velocity" (2002, Rebecca Miller), with Ellen Kuras. ♦ Sept. 21 at 5: "Summer of Sam" (1999, Spike Lee), also with Kuras. ♦ Sept. 22 at 2: "The Limey" (1999, Steven Soderbergh), with Ed Lachman. ♦ Repertory night. Sept. 22 at 6:30: "The Bicycle Thief" (1947, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Sept. 18-22 at 7:30: "Mahagonny" (1970-80/2002, Harry Smith). ♦ Sept. 19-24 at 7 and 9: A restored print of Conrad Rooks's "Siddhartha" (1972).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—"The World According to Shorts." Sept. 18 at 6:50 and 9:10: Programs of international short films. ♦ A Jacques Becker retrospective. All films are in French. Sept. 19 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10 and Sept. 20 at 2, 4:30, and 9:20: "Edouard and Caroline" (1951). ♦ Sept. 20 at 7: "Falbalas" (1944). ♦ Sept. 21 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10 and Sept. 22 at 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Casque d'Or" (†). ♦ The American cinema of Fritz Lang. Sept. 23-24 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Human Desire" (1954).

DIRECTORS GUILD THEATER
110 W. 57th St. (718-784-4520)—Sept. 20 at 7: "The Grey Zone" (2002, Tim Blake Nelson), followed by a conversation with the director.

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Oct. 10: A William Wyler retrospective. Sept. 18-19 at 3:15 and 7: "Dodsworth" (†). ♦ Sept. 18-19 at 1:25, 5:10, and 8:50: "Dead End" (1937). ♦ Sept. 20-21 at 3:30 and 7:20: "The Letter" (†). ♦ Sept. 20-21 at 1:30, 5:20, and 9:10: "Jezebel" (1938). ♦ Sept. 22 at 1, 5:15, and 9:30 and Sept. 23 at 1 and 5:10: "The Collector" (1965). ♦ Sept. 22 at 3:15 and 7:30 and Sept. 23 at 3:10: "The Children's Hour" (1961). ♦ Sept. 23 at 7:20 and 10:15: "Glamour" (1934). ♦ Sept. 23 at 8:50: "The Love Trap" (1929). ♦ Sept. 24 at 1:20, 4:20, and 7:20: "The Big Country" (1958).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Through Dec. 17: Neo-noir films. Sept. 24 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Police" (1958, Maurice Pialat; in French).

THE MANHATTAN SHORT FILM FESTIVAL
Union Square (684-8374)—Sept. 22 at 7: Free outdoor showings of short films, on screens throughout the park.

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE
58 Park Ave. (847-9746)—Films directed by Jorgen Leth. Sept. 18 at 6:30: "66 Scenes from America" (1981; in Danish) and "Dreamers" (2002; in English). ♦ Sept. 18 at 8:15: "Haiti. Untitled" (1996; in Danish, Creole, and French).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (358-0573)—Midnight movies. Sept. 20-21: "Nekromantik" (1987, Jorg Buttgereit; in German).

THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Sept. 21 at 2 and 7: "Gone with the Wind" (1939, Victor Fleming). ♦ Sept. 22 at 1:30 and 7: "The Women" (1939, George Cukor). ♦ Sept. 22 at 4 and 9:30: "Carmen Jones" (1954, Otto Preminger).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Sept. 27: "Tarkovsky at 70." Unless otherwise noted, all films are in Russian. Sept. 18 at 1 and 6:30 and Sept. 22 at 7: "Stalker" (1979). ♦ Sept. 18 at 4:15, Sept. 19 at 1, and Sept. 20 at 3:30 and 8:30: "Mirror a.k.a. The Looking Glass/Zerkalo" (1975). ♦ Sept. 18 at 9:30: "One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevich" (2000, Chris Marker; in French). ♦ Sept. 19 at 3:15: "Ivan's Childhood a.k.a. My Name Is Ivan" (1962). ♦ Sept. 20 at 1 and 6 and Sept. 23 at 6:30 and 9: "Nostalgia" (1983).

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To my children,

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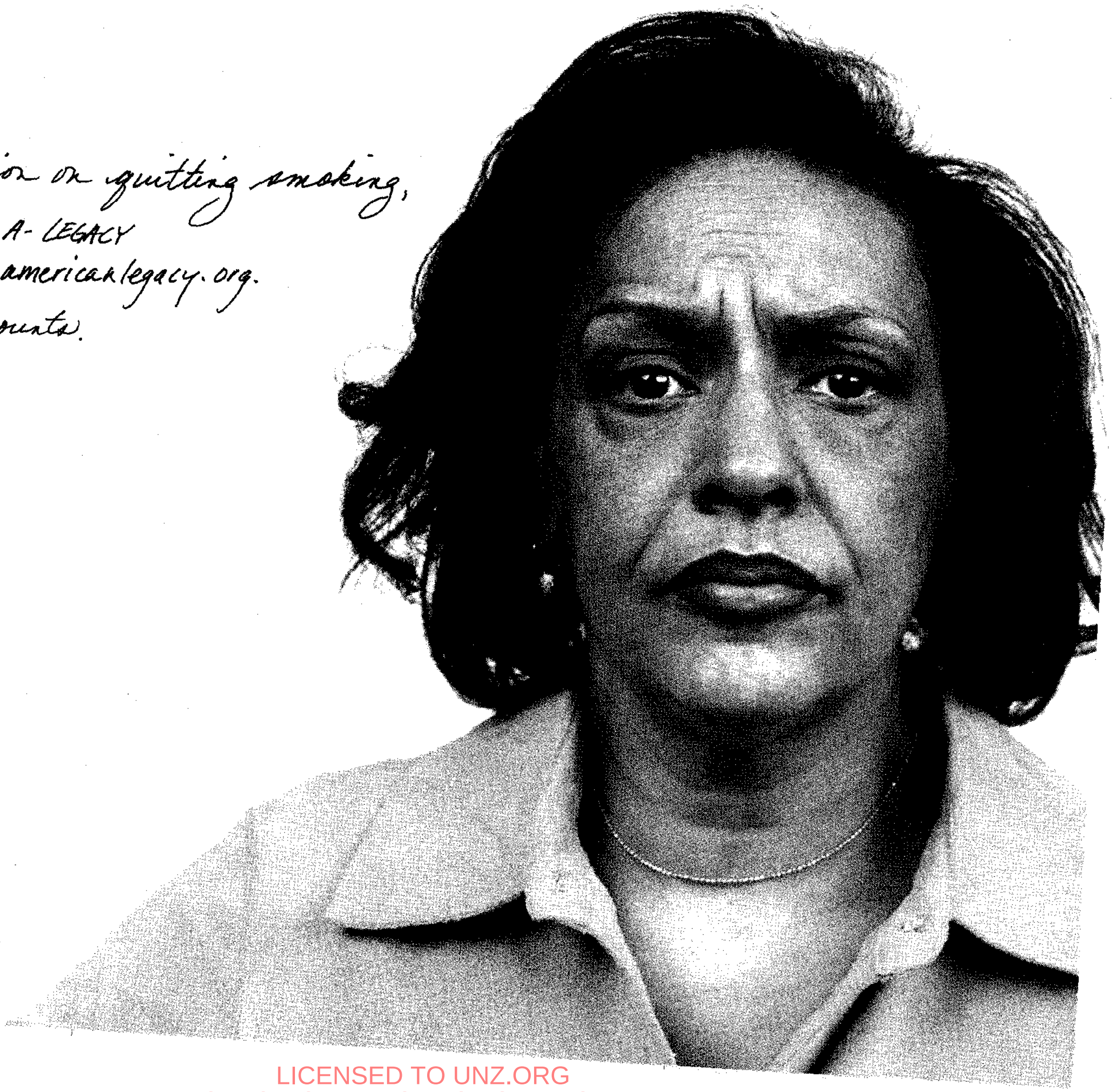
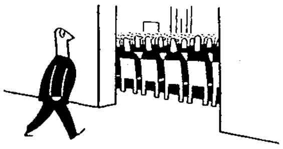


THE NEW YORKER

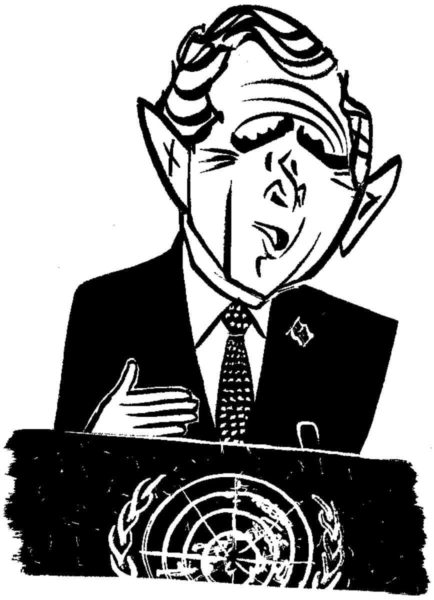
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
US AND THEM



Last Wednesday morning, one year to the hour after American Airlines Flight 11 rammed into the north tower of the World Trade Center, Rudolph Giuliani hunched over a lectern at Ground Zero and began reading the names of the dead in the tolling cadence of a funeral bell: "Gordon M. Aamoth, Jr. . . . Edelmiro Abad . . . Maria Rose Abad . . . Andrew Anthony Abate . . ." For ten minutes the "A"s went on, and the variation of nationality in that memorial list was all-embracing. Men and women from everywhere, it seemed, had made their way to New York, only to become victims of history's worst terrorist atrocity. Two and a half hours later came the conclusion: "Prokopios Paul Zois . . . Joseph J. Zuccala . . . Andrew S. Zucker . . . Igor Zukelman." Two thousand eight hundred and one names, ending with Mr. Zukelman, an immigrant from Ukraine, who had worked as a computer technician on the ninety-seventh floor of the north tower. At the site, the wind whipped up the dust, and a bugler played "Taps." The next morning, President Bush went before the United Nations General Assembly to declare his Administration's intentions toward the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, and to outline his case to a gathering of world leaders who, to one degree or another, have resisted what they see as a headlong rush to war.

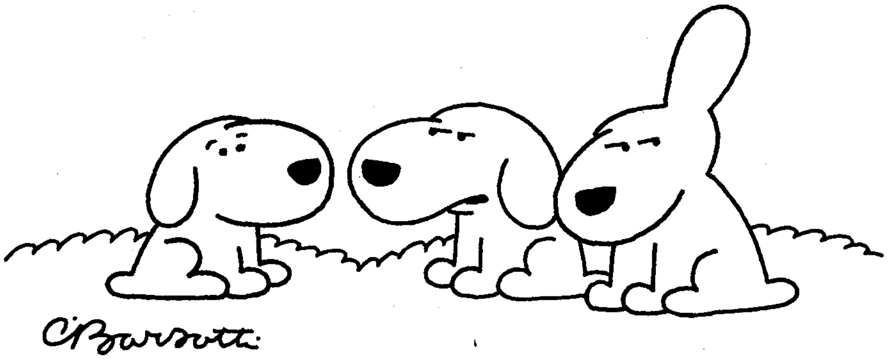
One does not have to believe that Bush II is acting out an Oedipal drama with Bush I in order to concede that what is happening now is deeply influenced by both the successes and the failures of the Gulf War in 1990 and 1991. Twelve years ago, Iraq, without provocation, invaded Kuwait and occupied its territory and its oil fields. The Administration of George H. W. Bush, with remarkable focus, immediately began the painstaking work of building a diplomatic and, finally, a military coalition. Drawing together the European nations, the Gulf States, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, persuading the Israelis to hold their fire even as the missiles flew from Iraq to Tel Aviv, setting specific military goals and keeping to them—these were extraordinary diplomatic achievements. The failure came in the endgame. Saddam was allowed to survive.



At the General Assembly, George W. Bush broadly sketched the crimes and treaty violations that Saddam has committed since the signing of the truce with the American-led coalition: the arrest, torture, and execution of dissidents; the harboring of and support for terrorists; the drive to stockpile biological and chemical weapons; and, above all, the unending effort to develop nuclear explosives—all in defiance of specific U.N. resolutions with which Iraq had agreed to comply. Iraq is not the only country on earth that falls into the modern category of "rogue states." But Saddam's record of murderous unpredictability, the scope and ruthlessness of his regional ambitions, and the scale of his wrongs make his a singularly threatening case. "We cannot stand by and do nothing while dangers gather," Mr. Bush said. About that he is right.

The U.N. speech, however, would have been a great deal more effective had it been the climax of a considered campaign of diplomatic mobilization. It was not. Instead, it followed a display of braggadocio and incoherence so scattershot as to amount to fecklessness. There was a mystifying debate-by-leak among Bush Cabinet members, mocking their self-conception as paragons of discretion and

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"Stay cool—we're picking up a lot of chatter."

self-discipline. There was a lot of belligerent, go-it-alone rhetoric, emanating especially from the offices of the Secretary of Defense and the Vice-President. There were the leaks of war plans to the press. And, most damaging, there were gratuitous expressions of scorn for international opinion and support. The contrast with Bush *père* could hardly be starker. The result was to frighten and alienate both the élites and the broader publics of much of the rest of the democratic world, and to what end?

The essential moment of the President's speech came at its peroration. "We will work with the U.N. Security Council for the necessary resolutions," Bush said. "But the purposes of the United States should not be doubted. The Security Council resolutions will be enforced. The just demands of peace and security will be met, or action will be unavoidable. And a regime that has lost its legitimacy will also lose its power."

He concluded, "We must stand up for our security and for the permanent rights and the hopes of mankind. By heritage and by choice, the United States of America will make that stand. And, delegates to the United Nations, you have the power to make that stand, as well. Thank you very much."

Well, thank *you* very much. Such was the reaction in some corners of the hall. In plain terms, the President was saying: We're going ahead, to war. It would be nice if you joined us. But, if not, have I mentioned that we're going ahead?

This is an error of diplomatic tone that risks serious consequences. According to Kanan Makiya, a prominent Iraqi dissident and writer, the military side of what the Administration calls "regime change" would be "a total pushover." Saddam's army barely fought for him a decade ago; now, at about a third the size it was then and far less formidably equipped, it faces an American military that is stronger than ever. What will be most difficult is precisely what Bush and his aides disdained when they took office: "nation-building." After the battle, establishing a stable, peaceful Iraq will require enormous resources and dedication. The record in Afghanistan over the past several months has been discouraging. The United States has not done nearly enough to prevent the kind of backsliding that could return Afghanistan to the lawlessness that, after the Soviet withdrawal, in 1989, nurtured the Taliban and its Al Qaeda brethren. We abandoned Afghanistan then, at a terrible cost; we are in danger of doing so again. To commit the same mistake in a post-Saddam Iraq would be to invite catastrophe.

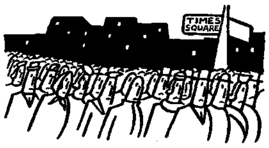
A victory over Saddam legitimatized by broad, if not unanimous, international support and, if possible, participation would have a meaning quite different from that of one imposed in isolation. The risks would still be considerable, but some of the most daunting—regional upheaval, renewed terrorist fanaticism, severe damage to the system of international comity and trust that maintains order in most of the world—could be markedly reduced.

The President's case has now been outlined, but it has not been made complete. To clinch it will require the marshalling of evidence more concrete and arguments more detailed than have yet been presented. As far as the interests of the United States and the civilized world are concerned, regime change in Iraq, however beneficial it might be to the Iraqis, is a means to achieving nuclear security. It still may be possible to achieve that goal through a combination of diplomacy, including credible arms inspections, and an internationally sanctioned threat of force. That possibility, however slim, should be exhausted first.

Kofi Annan, the U.N. Secretary-General, also delivered a speech to the General Assembly last Thursday, just before Bush's. Annan's remarks were widely interpreted as an admonition to the United States not to act alone. But his bluntest words were directed to "the leadership of Iraq," which, he said, "continues to defy mandatory resolutions adopted by the Security Council." He added, "If Iraq's defiance continues, the Security Council must face its responsibilities." And so it must. Prolonged inaction in the face of such danger is not a choice. If the United Nations finally averts its eyes, then, and only then, will the responsibility fall to the United States.

—*David Remnick*

LAS VEGAS POSTCARD
A DESERT TRIBUTE



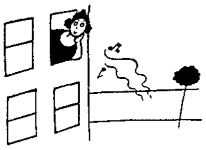
When the New York-New York Hotel and Casino opened in Las Vegas, five years ago, the absence of the World Trade Center towers from the resort's ersatz skyline seemed like a reasonable omission, the kind of messing around with reality that is to be expected from a city where a volcano spews lava on schedule every evening, and where a Venetian canal, complete with singing gondoliers, can be found one flight up from a rattling casino floor. New York-New York does include a squat forty-seven-story replica of the Empire State Building; a scaled-down Chrysler Building that is significantly less shiny than the real thing, on account of its being topped with fibreglass rather than steel; a slice of Lever House; and a massively oversized Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument that seems designed to perplex visiting New Yorkers, who are not sure they've ever noticed the real thing. When the hotel was built, its developers explained away the missing Twin Towers by suggesting that the complex was supposed to evoke a Manhattan of the nineteen-forties; and, if that does not quite account for why, at the foot of the diminutive replica of the Brooklyn Bridge, one can find the ESPN Zone, it should be remembered that, even in Jazz Age New York, commerce was occasionally known to trump integrity.

Last Wednesday, a resilient commitment to commerce was demonstrated by the management of New York-New York, even as the horrible reconfiguring of the real New York skyline, in accordance with its desert simulacrum, was memorialized. It was decided that the terrorists would have won if the tourists were deprived of their opportunity to lose, so the casino—an indoor version of Central Park, filled with one-armed bandits instead of rollerbladers—remained open. But the solemnity of the day was marked nonetheless. Toward noon, a large crowd gathered at the intersection of Tropicana Avenue and the Strip, where a hundred-and-fifty-foot replica of the Statue of Liberty surveys a miniaturized New York Harbor, in which two scaled-down fireboats spray water over a nonexistent inferno. This spot has, during the past year, become an unofficial memorial to the events that befell the real New York, New York: T-shirts from fire departments across the country have been hung over the harbor railings, many bearing handwritten messages of sympathy. (From Deerfield Beach Fire and Rescue: "May the fabric of this T-shirt represent the fabric of a nation who is forever indebted to those brave souls that made the ultimate sacrifice in honoring our sworn duty.") Whereas most of the spontaneous memorials that appeared in the real New York were swiftly removed or relocated, this one has remained intact, and the T-shirts, in contrast to the casino's pristine exterior, have been faded by harsh sunlight and washed by infrequent rain.

A patch of red carpet had been set up for some bagpipers, who alternated between "God Bless America" and "Amazing Grace," while vacationers milled about, paying their respects. Steve Ray, a retired firefighter from Alabama, said, "Those boys in New York, they had a bad shift." Janie Ray, his wife, clutched a plastic cup filled with tokens to her chest and looked on sadly. Shortly before midday, the Manhattan Express, a roller coaster that swoops amid the huddled skyscrapers at regular intervals, so that they ring with the screams of terrified riders, was stilled. Moments later, a hundred doves were released from somewhere around the bagpipers' feet, with a sudden fluttering of wings. A few tourists let go of the red, white, or blue helium-filled balloons they had been holding, and there was scattered applause. It was, for Las Vegas, a remarkably subdued display. Mary Shugrue, a program manager from Flatbush by way of Maryland, who was wearing a T-shirt bearing the letters "USA" and a pin bearing the image of firefighters raising the flag at Ground Zero, wiped tears from her eyes. "I woke up early this morning to watch the ceremonies on the East Coast, and waking up in Las Vegas at five is hard," she said. "Every time I see it on TV, I start crying. Those two towers were New York." She looked up at the New York-New York skyline. "Apart from the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building. It's odd that they didn't have them here. I guess they were too big." The balloons drifted off on the wind, over the Bavarian turrets and ramparts of the Excalibur hotel. The birds circled low above the intersection, hovered for a moment by the MGM Grand, then turned south and headed toward the black glass pyramid of the Luxor, Las Vegas's reimagined Egypt.

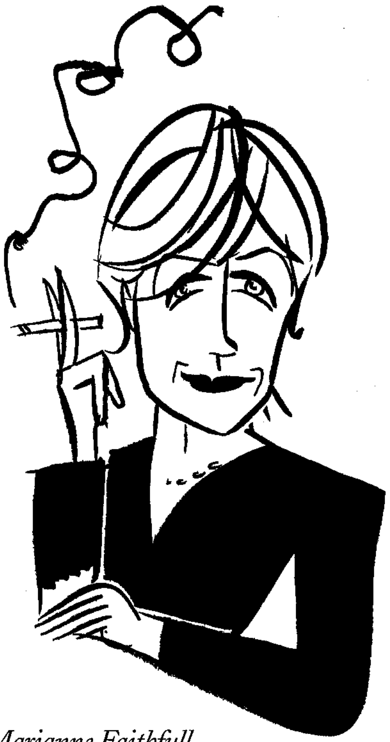
—*Rebecca Mead*

THE MUSICAL LIFE
FAITHFULL



Marianne Faithfull—singer, songwriter, memoirist, occasional film actress, occasional stage actress, and all-around legend—was in town the other day to do a little shopping and catch up with friends before heading off on a short tour (which ends at Irving Plaza this week) to promote her latest album, "Kissin Time." Faithfull regards touring as a necessity. "It's not as if they play my stuff on the radio," she said with an easy, cigarette-husky laugh.

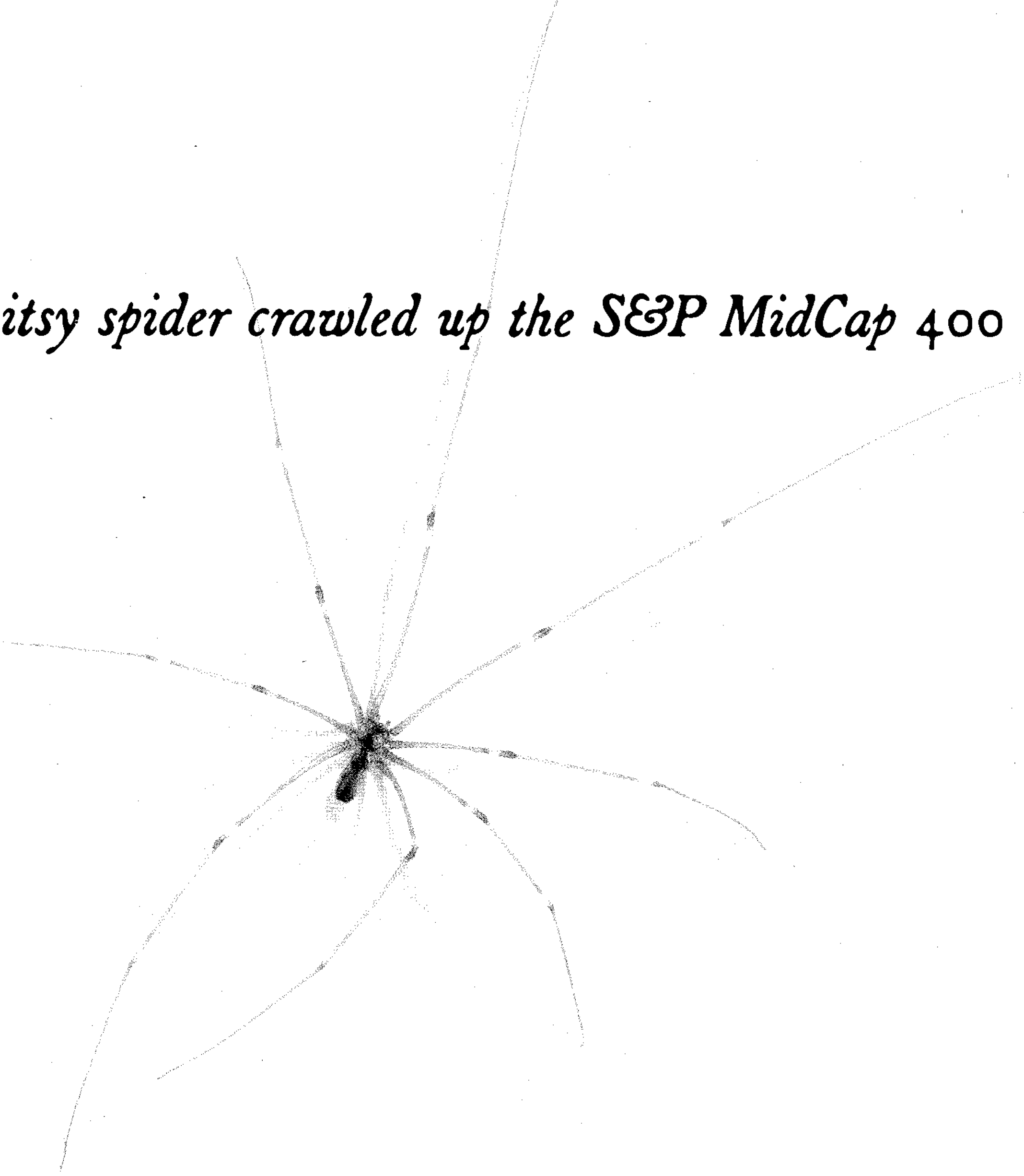
Running her fingers through her blond-white hair, which she wears short now, and then lighting a cigarette—the first of many—Faithfull stepped out of the dark lobby of the Chelsea Hotel, on West Twenty-third Street, where she was staying. She was dressed in signature Marianne Faithfull gear (black tailored jacket, black jeans, black flats) and was carrying a big black Chanel bag. "I never used to stay at the Chelsea," she said as she made her way to the bar at El Quixote. She found a stool and went on, "I never stayed at the Chelsea because of all the drugs, when I was trying to get off drugs. It was much too Sid and Nancy. I never saw the film. I lived the film. But it's brighter there now, less heavy, lighter." She tapped her cigarette against the rim of an ashtray and took a sip of fizzy water. "Hotels are all right if you have a home, which I don't. My beautiful two-story flat in Ireland—they're chopping it up into four flats. My cork floors! But I didn't own it. All of my things are in storage." Laughing, she said, "This moving is forcing me to shop. Which is not a hardship." She put her head down on the bar, a caricature of world-weariness. "I am fifty-five years of age," she said, and shrugged. "I'm touring to get the record out there, of course, and to start saving, so I can have something to call my own.



Marianne Faithfull

" 'Kissin Time' was a real collaboration between me and Beck and the guys in Blur, and Billy Corgan—all the mates

{ *The itsy-bitsy spider crawled up the S&P MidCap* 400



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on the album. And they *are* mates. My manager asked me to make a list of the people I wanted to work with, new people who know what a Pro Tools kit is. I certainly didn't." Faithfull, the survivor, chuckled. "And every single person we asked said yes."

"I'm working with P. J. Harvey on some new songs," Faithfull said. "Songs inspired by films. 'Atlantic City.' 'Pretty Baby.' Polly and I keep trying to outdo each other on who is the queen of doom and gloom. She thinks she is." Faithfull sighed and cleared her throat, as if preparing it for a big laugh, which did come. "That little pipsqueak. Polly is so disciplined. She writes even when she's on tour. I can't. Oh, I have little thoughts and feelings. I dream. But when I'm on tour I have to go out there and be Marianne Faithfull. When I'm alone, home somewhere, wherever that ends up being, I write. Then I'm just me."

—*Hilton Als*

LOST AND FOUND
REAL FOLK

It's been a summer of windfalls at the American Folk Art Museum. First, in July, at the World Architecture Awards, the museum was named the best new building in the world. And then, in August, something else rather extraordinary happened, involving a popular sculpture that has stood in the entryway of the museum since its opening, last December. The "Crouching Man," an inquisitive-looking figure made of stacked wooden disks, peers out from under a staircase, catching viewers by surprise and inspiring some of them to toss coins at his feet. For years, the identity of its creator was a mystery, and, until recently, a label next to the piece read, "Not much is known about this sculpture. . . . It is believed [to have been] created by a farmer from the village of Unadilla in upstate New York around the 1940s or 1950s."

Efforts by the museum to find the artist had been unsuccessful. But in June a letter arrived from an antiques dealer near Cooperstown who claimed to have bought "Crouching Man" from its maker, some twenty years earlier. The artist, he said, was Milton Moore, a ninety-three-year-old retired farmer living in New Berlin, New York.

Brooke Davis Anderson, the director and curator of the museum's contemporary center, made several calls to Moore's home but got no response. A letter went unanswered. But finally she received a call from a woman named Pat Gifford, who said that she was a friend of Moore's. Gifford explained that she and Moore had been on a road trip to Alaska, travelling seven thousand miles in six weeks in her customized van. She took up Anderson's invitation to drive down to New York with Moore to see the sculpture.

When the two arrived, on a recent sunny morning, the entire senior staff of the museum was waiting in the lobby to greet them. Gifford walked in first. She is a short sixty-four-year-old woman with golden hair who was attached to an oxygen machine. Moore came behind her, carrying her oxygen tank in one hand and a wrinkled plastic bag in the other. He is tall and thin, and wore a baseball hat, a plaid shirt, and black pants with suspenders.

"We're not used to this," Gifford said. "We're not used to this."

"You want to sit down for a little bit?" Anderson asked her.

"I need to," Gifford said. "This is some city. Last time I came down—" She tried, unsuccessfully, to catch her breath. "We're not used to this. I've never parked in a parking lot like that, where they take your car and go."

Gifford went on to explain that they'd been pulled over by the police near the George Washington Bridge. She'd been driving slowly, she said, because she was lost. "One of them came up to the window and said, 'Where you from?' I said, 'New Berlin.' I said, 'I have less than an hour to get to this Folk Art Museum, and they're expecting us, and I like to be somewhere on time.' But he kept asking questions. He said to Milton, 'What do you do in New Berlin?' And Milton says, 'I go hunting.' And he asked him with what—shotguns or rifles? And Milton says, 'I use both.' And then they got to talking. And I said, 'Listen, we've really got to find this museum.' So they looked at our little map, which I got off the computer, and they said, 'We'll get you down there.' They pulled traffic aside for us. We went through red lights and everything."

As Gifford told this story, Moore pulled a wooden disk from the plastic bag he was holding. It was the size of a salad plate, with an intricate, diamond-pattern design.

"He's made two of them," Gifford told the hovering crowd. "Pick it up. It doesn't bite. Look it over."

"Took me three weeks to make that," Moore said. "Eight hours a day." He went on to talk about birdhouses he makes. "They're not just ordinary," he said.

"They're so big we call them bird stations," Gifford said. She began to describe other projects: windmills, rose arbors, corner cabinets, a house that Moore built in four weeks, while he was on sick leave from the Kraft cheese factory where he once worked. "This is so exciting!" she said. "Aren't you excited, Milton?"

"Well, yes. But I don't like New York."

"I would love to get him up to the Empire State Building," Gifford said. "I was thinking about taking the subway. Are we near the subway?"

"I have a pond out back of my house, and it's completely covered with pink water lilies," Moore said. "I had it stocked, but you can't even get a fish line in anywhere, there are so many flowers."

When Anderson led Moore and Gifford over to "Crouching Man," Moore said, "That's it? Oh, my goodness, I didn't think I'd ever see it again."

Someone asked what his inspiration for the sculpture had been.

"I don't really know," he said. "I never had a teacher to make anything. I learned it all out of books."

"He doesn't really think he's an artist," Gifford said.

"What do you consider your occupation?" Anderson asked.

"Well, I figure I was a better farmer when I was farming."

"He raised chickens," Gifford said. "He was a chicken farmer."

Later, as they toured the museum, Moore seemed impressed by the collection. On the third floor, he stopped before a wooden secretary that had been ornamented with twenty-one thousand pieces of wood from three hundred species of tree. "My golly, isn't that something," he said. Still, his opinion of New York City had not changed. "I don't like no part of it, to tell you the truth."

—*Lauren MacIntyre*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE

THE BUFFETT OF BASEBALL

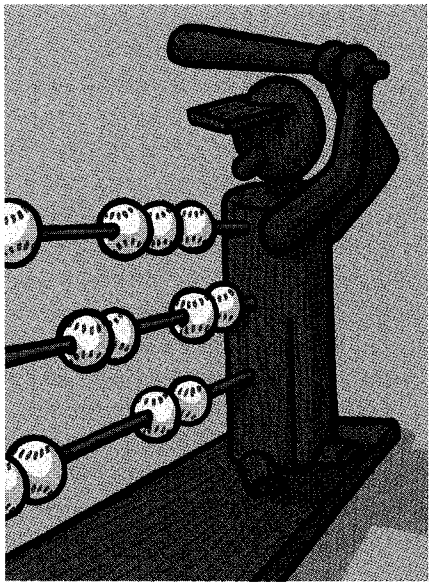
Even if you set aside the accounting scams and the free palaces for C.E.O.s, these last few years would rate as some of the most dismal in the annals of corporate leadership. Intoxicated by cheap money, executives squandered hundreds of billions of dollars on doomed mergers, vacant dot-com warehouses, and thousands of miles of useless fibre-optic cable. Now their rickety empires are falling to pieces.

Billy Beane followed a different path. Beane was frugal, Beane was shrewd. In three short years, he turned a stumbling outfit into a profitable enterprise that is the pride of its industry. If he hasn't been recognized as one of the most successful executives in America, it's only because his business isn't derivatives or microchips. It's baseball.

Beane is the general manager of the Oakland A's, one of baseball's much pitied small-market teams. The A's don't have a deep-pocketed owner or a fancy stadium, so their payroll is small—about one-third that of the Yankees. In an era of high-priced free agents, the A's should be sad-sack losers, but they've reached the playoffs in the last two years, and they've been this summer's hottest major-league team. Recently, they won twenty games in a row.

How has Beane done it? Most baseball men subscribe to familiar truisms about talent, character, and the chemistry of winning teams. Over the years, however, extensive scientific research into baseball statistics—often called "sabermetrics," after the Society for American Baseball Research—has proved most of these truisms to be false. The Copernicus of this revolution was a mechanical engineer named Earnshaw Cook, who, in the early nineteen-sixties, compiled reams of data that overturned baseball's conventional wisdom, and then presented the data to executives at a handful of struggling teams. The executives shooed him away. So Cook wrote a book, called "Percentage Baseball." Most of its assertions were irrefutable. They were also universally ignored (except by Philip Roth, who used Cook as the inspiration for Isaac Ellis, the kid genius who coaches the Ruppert Mundys, in "The Great American Novel").

Since then, thanks in large part to the work of the sabermetrician Bill James, a number of baseball executives—including Beane's mentor and predecessor, Sandy Alderson—have tinkered with the sabermetric method. But Beane is the first G.M. to build his organization around it. He and his assistants focus on things that can be measured (like someone's ability to get on base), instead of things that can't (like whether someone is a clutch hitter). Beane uses actuarial analysis to figure out, say, the odds of a high-school pitcher's becoming a major leaguer. And, in drafting and acquiring talent, he relies on sabermetric truths. For instance, if your team draws a lot of walks and hits a lot of home runs while giving up few of each, it will win a lot of ballgames. So Beane has stocked his team with sluggers who take walks, and control pitchers who rarely give up home runs. This strategy wins games and, equally important, saves money, because even though the players Beane likes are as productive as many high-profile stars with gaudy stats, they come a lot cheaper. Think of Beane as the Warren Buffett of baseball.



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

It wasn't enough for Beane just to get the right players; he also had to get them to play right. Baseball strategy became organizational philosophy. To stress patience at the plate, the A's give awards only to those minor leaguers who walk at least once in every ten at-bats. Beane, like many sabermetricians, thinks sacrifice bunts and stolen bases are overrated: the A's have fewer of each than any other team in baseball. Even the A's TV broadcasters follow the Beane way: they emphasize on-base percentage—very sabermetric. Oakland is like a hyper-efficient factory that produces Billy Beane ballplayers. "For whatever reason, I've always been interested in finding a better way to make a better widget," Beane said last week.

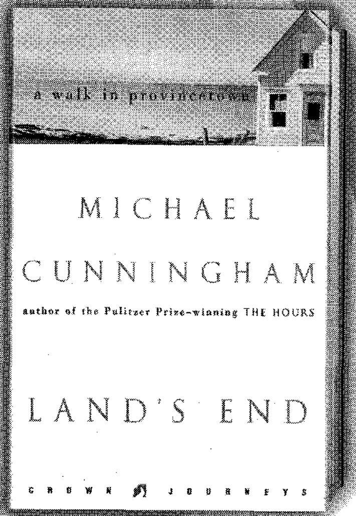
The A's approach was born, in part, of necessity. "We can't do things the way everyone else does, because of our payroll," Beane said. "We had to create our own niche and be disciplined about staying with it." In a sense, the small budget has worked to Oakland's advantage. If corporate America's excesses in the last decade demonstrated the perils of having too much capital, Oakland's success has demonstrated the virtue of having just enough.

But can it last? In baseball, conventional wisdom may still rule, but Oakland, like any successful business, has begun to attract imitators, which will presumably make it harder for Beane to find his diamonds in the rough. Even so, Oakland has one great competitive advantage: the entire organization has been built, from the bottom up, around Beane's ideas. In this respect, Oakland resembles companies like Dell Computer and Southwest Airlines, which have structured their business around a coherent strategy. Dell's rivals have tried for years to emulate its made-to-order, just-in-time model. But the copycats, because their businesses were initially built around different models, couldn't compete. The major airlines haven't had any better luck trying to copy Southwest.

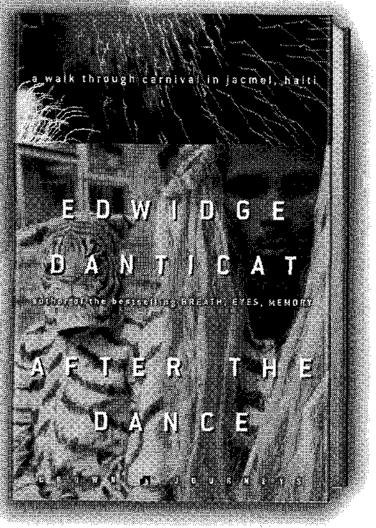
Oakland's success is the fruit of what the legendary corporate theorist Michael Porter likes to call "strategic fit." Every part of its business is tightly linked with every other part, creating, in Porter's words, "a chain that is as strong as its strongest link." You get strategic fit only when you have a clear sense of what you are and of what you are not. "The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do," Porter says. By choice and by necessity, Beane decided that the A's would never be a team of conventional stars. And that has made him the best general manager in baseball.

—*James Surowiecki*

"Extraordinary....
These titles remind us that the essence of a place cannot be found in any guidebook."
— Time Out



"Haunting, beautiful.... Cunningham knows [Provincetown] well, and is an informed, sensitive, ultra-intelligent guide.... A magnificent work of art."
— The Washington Post


a walk through carnival in jacmel, haiti
EDWIDGE DANTICAT
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ANNALS OF SHOW BUSINESS

THIS IS GOING TO BE BIG

How publicity really works in Hollywood.

BY TAD FRIEND

The view from the upper reaches of the Four Seasons Hotel in Los Angeles is magnificent: all Beverly Hills glitters below. But on a clear day last year the three people in Room 1429—the public-relations consultant Bumble Ward, her associate Bebe Lerner, and their client John Stockwell, a novice movie director—were huddled around a coffee table finishing up a hurried lunch. Disney Studios had rented the floor for a press junket to promote "Crazy/Beautiful," Stockwell's film about an interracial teen romance, and there was a short break between Stockwell's morning battery of five-minute television interviews with the international press and his afternoon roundtables—six twenty-minute sessions with groups of seven print journalists, who would toss rapid-fire questions at him and at the film's stars, Kirsten Dunst and Jay Hernandez. By stuffing the press and the talent together in a hotel for a weekend, a studio can market a film to every media outlet from the Dallas *Morning News* to FilmStew.com and Brazil's Globo television, at the relatively modest cost of three or four hundred thousand dollars.

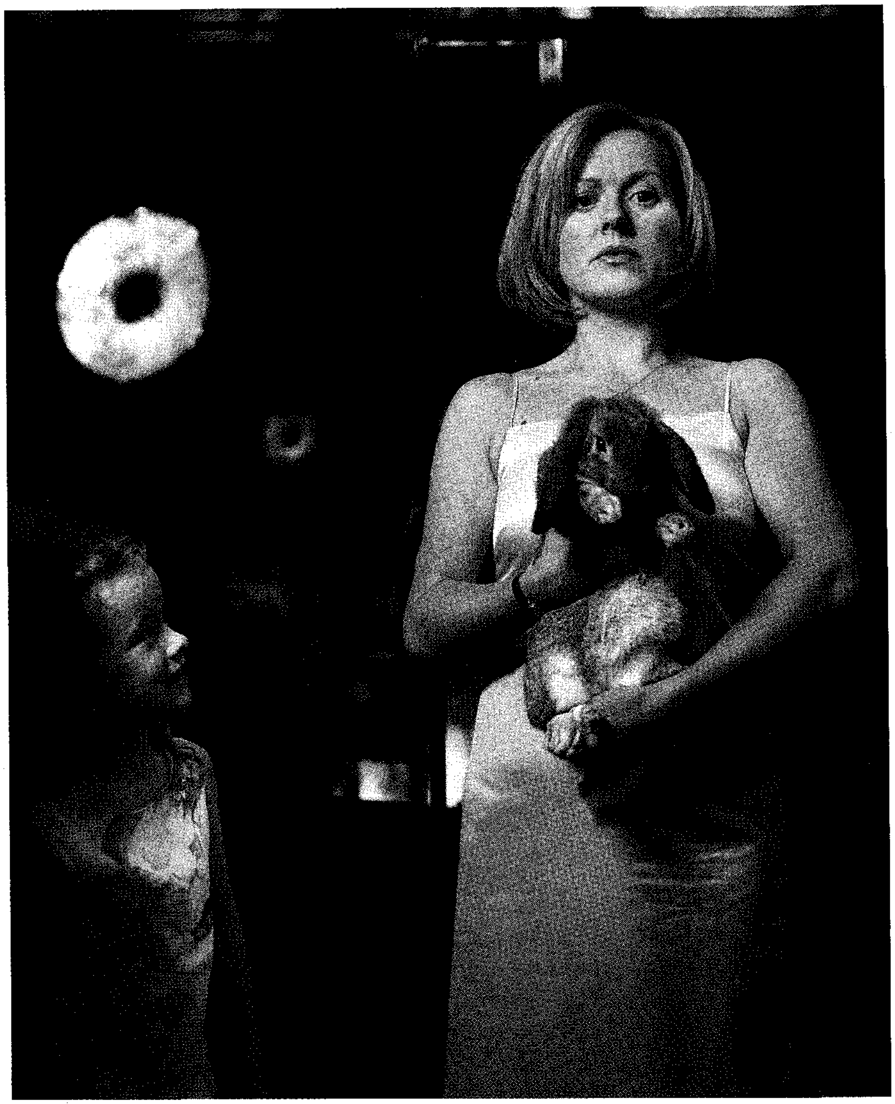
Stockwell, a handsome, unshaved man of forty-one with a surfer's tan, was rolling his neck like a calf in a veal pen. "I keep hoping these journalists will go provocative and ask, 'How was your film neutered?' " he said. "Crazy/Beautiful" was planned as an R-rated feature, but then Disney executives decided that they wanted a more commercial PG-13 rating and made Stockwell cut thirty-five obscenities, bowdlerize a sex scene, and eliminate a character's drug use. "But with the Disney people hovering, and the journalists wanting to be invited back to the next junket, for the hotel and the free food, they don't. If they're asking you to autograph the press kits"—the signed packets often show up on eBay the next day, selling for about twenty-five dollars—"it's not going to be a very probing interview. In fact, it's unbelievably boring."

"It is boring," Ward agreed. A thirty-nine-year-old British woman with a tangle of dark-blond hair that she wishes she had the time to blow out more often—she feels better organized with straight hair—Ward had on a white silk pants suit and sandals whose high heels were made of raffia dipped in Lucite. "But if you have an agenda," she continued, "you need to cram it down the press's throat, say it four times." At a junket for "Planet of the Apes" in New York, a few weeks earlier, I had watched the film's director, Tim Burton, another Ward client, gamely repeat in most of his thirty-two-straight television interviews that the movie (which appeared to be about stars glumly capering in ape suits) was really about "globalization" and the "fragmentation of society."

"It's terrifying that if a journalist writes something negative the top three or four publicists will blacklist him," Stockwell continued. "Publicists are the death of interesting journalism about entertainment." Ward laughed and pretended to strangle herself.

Hollywood publicists polish their clients' images in one of two ways: either by making news or by extinguishing it. Old-fashioned press agents, silver-haired gents whose walls are covered with photos of themselves alongside Debbie Reynolds and Danny Kaye, will make news on behalf of the Harlem Globetrotters by arranging for, say, the Pope to accept an award as an Honorary Globetrotter. A newer breed of gatekeepers, sleek young whippets who return calls at midnight or never, allow the press to glimpse their stars only at Halley's-comet-like intervals. And in return for access they insist that journalists agree to all sorts of specific preconditions: never, for instance, ask Arnold Schwarzenegger if his father was a Nazi; don't quiz Eddie Murphy about the night the police stopped him for picking up a transsexual hooker on Santa Monica Boulevard; refrain from questioning Mark

Wahlberg about the time he clobbered a Vietnamese man with a stick and called him a "slant-eyed gook motherfucker"; and if you're interviewing Tom Cruise—who once rejected fourteen writers proposed by *Rolling Stone* before agreeing to a reporter who turned in a puff piece—don't bring up anything personal at all.



Bumble Ward says, "I take this way too personally." Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

CORBIS SABA

Although Bumble Ward has little in common with the press agents of the old school, she does believe in making news. As the industry's leading publicist for directors—her twelve-person firm, Bumble Ward & Associates, represents Quentin Tarantino, Paul Thomas Anderson, Jay Roach, and Bobby and Peter Farrelly, among forty other directors—she has clients who both seek attention and can withstand it. "Filmmakers have fantastically interesting stories to tell, and actors don't," Ward says. She is also by nature a cheerleader. Many of the five dozen phone conversations she has each day close with a thunderclap of optimism: "Super! Lovely! Fan*tas*tic!"

Her clients often express a darker view. Quentin Tarantino, for example, has grown wary of journalists. "They don't have anything on you, but it's time in the cycle to take you down," he says. "So they kill you with verbs and adjectives. 'He *lumbered* into the room.' 'He *hesitated* over the shrimp.' '*Gesticulating* wildly, the *motormouth* Tarantino . . .' Hey, fuck you, you wanna-be novelist!"

At the Four Seasons, Stockwell told Ward and Lerner, "You guys impressed me with that concept of the Tastemakers, the tiny group of media insiders who make everything happen, who generate buzz when they talk to, um . . ."

"Other Tastemakers!" said Bebe Lerner, whose toenails were painted silvery blue.

He went on to describe how the publicists had set up a lunch for him with Patrick Goldstein, the Hollywood columnist for the Los Angeles *Times*, and orchestrated a *Newsweek* article by Goldstein's friend John Horn. In *Newsweek*, Stockwell complained about Disney's edits and said the studio was "scared of anything on the edge," comments that inspired more articles. Ward also screened "Crazy/Beautiful" for *Elle's* film critic, Karen Durbin, who recommended it to a friend at the *Times*, and the paper's Arts & Leisure section later ran a long article about Stockwell.

"What does a full-page ad in the *Times* cost—a hundred thousand dollars?" Stockwell said. "And there we were with a full page and a photo. More people in hiring positions read the *Times* piece about me than saw the movie. In a strange way, that kind of exposure allows you to express yourself almost more than the actual movie does." He paused. "You just have to avoid turning into Michael Bay," he said, referring to another Ward client, the director of "Pearl Harbor" and "Armageddon," who flaunts his visits to the Playboy Mansion and will happily discuss the size of his penis. "Memo to self," Stockwell continued, still on the topic of Bay. "Don't park the Ferrari in the handicapped spot."

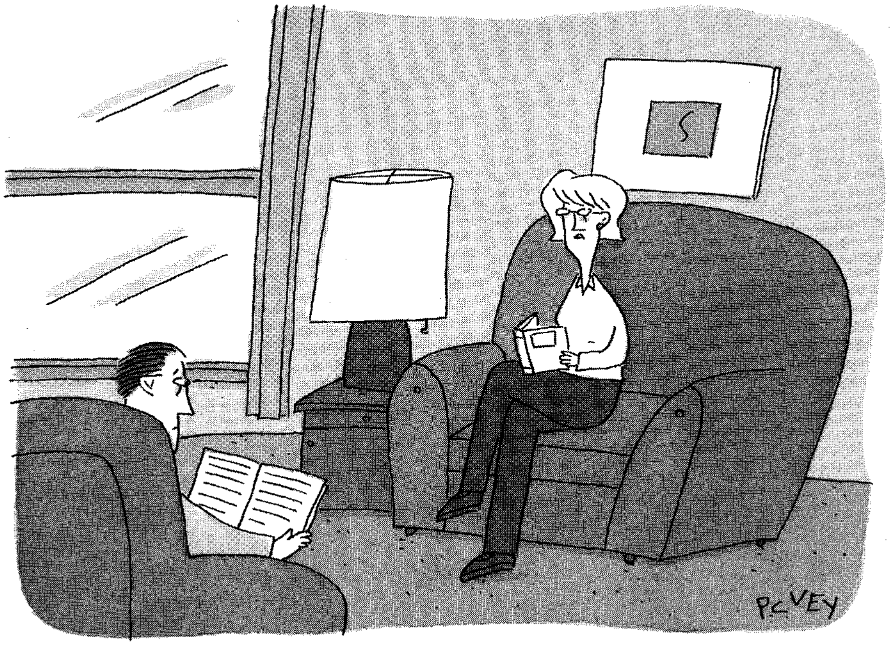
Ward blushed. She has tried to rein Bay in, telling him teasingly, "We need the softer Bay, the gay Bay," but still, during an interview for *Esquire*, he parked his Ferrari in a handicapped spot, a detail that featured prominently in the piece. Ward maintains, nevertheless, that he is a fantastic talent. She says, "Michael Bay is not an auteur, but he can blow shit up better than anyone, and there's something *lovely* about that."

Assuming an airy, spokesperson's tone, Ward told Stockwell, "Michael is refreshingly unashamed of his Ferrari." She giggled and went on, "But you have to remember also that journalists are not your friends."

"They're not your enemy," Stockwell countered.

"They're your *media friends!*" Lerner said.

In Hollywood, there are two ways to promote the product. The first is marketing: paid ads. The second is public relations: press that might as well be paid for, free speech harnessed to



"Now that the kids are in jail, maybe we can take that vacation we always wanted."

• •

the purposes of commercial speech. In the days of the studio system, the press was compliant, and mythmaking was easy. In 1915, no one questioned Fox Film Corporation's claim that Theda Bara was the daughter of a French artist and an Arab princess, "born in the shadow of the Sphinx" and "weaned on serpent's blood." (Bara, born Theodosia Goodman, was actually from Cincinnati.) Other triumphs of publicity occurred when Howard Hughes's publicist, Lincoln Quarberg, coined the phrase "platinum blond" to describe Jean Harlow's (dyed) hair and when Russell Birdwell arranged for Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier's wedding to coincide with the release of "Gone with the Wind."

But today, in the era of expensive blockbusters that need to earn huge amounts on their opening weekends, selling is no longer so oblique. "If you can get Pamela Anderson to drive down Sunset Boulevard in a pink T-bird with her boobs hanging out while carrying a fish for 'The Fish Movie'—well, who cares?" John Calley, the chairman of Sony Pictures, says. "If I want to reach people, I'll take ads on 'Survivor.'"

Publicity campaigns for big-budget movies are as noisy and purposeful as a cloud of locusts. Studio publicists view every magazine cover as a potential movie poster, and they adhere to a strict formula: each of a film's stars should appear on two or three covers, and if it's an ensemble cast the group should adorn the cover of *Entertainment Weekly*. Studios sell stars because it's efficient: their images are already established.

Because Bumble Ward is selling directors, she has to work harder, finding sympathetic journalists who will champion her clients. Ward and her colleagues read every entertainment publication from cover to cover; they are the first to call a journalist with compliments, and they often have a keener understanding of a writer's tastes than the writer's editor does. In Ward's staff meetings, you'll hear that Ned Zeman is no longer editing celebrity profiles at *Vanity Fair*, that Susan King, of the Los Angeles *Times*, loves old Hollywood stories but is on vacation, that Kevin Thomas, also of the Los Angeles *Times*, likes morning screenings and grumbles if the room is too cold.

"At the Arts & Leisure section of the *Times* and at our paper's Calendar section, the editors like to think that the stories are their ideas," Patrick Goldstein, of the Los Angeles *Times*, says. "But half of it, and it wouldn't surprise me if it's more, comes from publicists like Bumble."

To plant the stories their clients need, publicists work to create what they call the win-win, in which every party involved in a story ends up happy. In the late sixties, Lee Solters, who represented Frank Sinatra, had a brainstorm about how to fix his client's rocky relationship with the press: "We invite the top two columnists in each city to visit you backstage for five minutes before the show," he suggested. "They shake your hand, there's a knock on the door—'Mr. Sinatra, you're on'—and you're gone, with no idle chat, and they're thinking, My God!" The first columnist they tried this on was Larry Fields, of the Philadelphia *Daily News*, whose wife fainted when Sinatra kissed her cheek. "Take care of it, Lee," Sinatra said, and he was off. "We built an army of thirty-two mouthpieces all over the country," Solters told me gleefully, "and every time Sinatra toured they would write all this bullshit about him—'He's not an ogre!' It worked for everyone. They were impressed, their editors were impressed, and their readers were impressed that the local columnist knew Frank."

For "The Talented Mr. Ripley," the 1999 film about a psychopathic killer, Leslee Dart, of PMK/HBH, the preëminent entertainment-publicity firm, was convinced that she needed to anchor her campaign with what she called a "media leader" piece. She wanted a writer "who would explain the complexities of the movie accurately and positively, setting the tone for everyone else." She chose Frank Rich, of the *Times*, who was then looking for a big cultural piece to write about the movies. Dart is a consummate publicist, in part because she's a consummate worrier. In 1995, when Hugh Grant took her advice and appeared on the "Tonight Show" to explain why he'd solicited oral sex near Hollywood Boulevard, Dart was so nervous before the interview that she threw up in Grant's dressing room. She was nearly as anxious about placing "Mr. Ripley" 's prospects in one journalist's hands. "There's no way I could say to Frank Rich, 'Now, this needs to be positive!'" Dart says. "But he saw two edits of the film, he had hours with Anthony Minghella, the director, and he knew he was getting unheard-of access."

Rich dismisses the possibility that he was manipulated. "You're always aware of publicists' agendas," he says. "And you always ignore them." As is standard practice, Rich mentioned neither Dart

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nor her agenda in his celebratory seven-thousand-word cover story for the *Times Magazine*, which called Minghella's Ripley a "Gatsbyesque dreamer who goes too far." It is in everyone's interest (except, perhaps, the reader's) to pretend that P.R. consultants are not involved in stories. It behooves the journalist, because it suggests that he has penetrated a rarefied realm; it behooves the star, because he looks fearless and unattended by handlers; and it behooves the publicist, because it always behooves the publicist if the star is behooved.

Last year, the publicist Stephen Rivers helped arrange for "Thirteen Days" to be the first film that George W. Bush screened at the White House. "A journalist from *PR Week* asked me, 'Whose idea was that?' " Rivers says. "The only right answer is 'It was the President's idea.' "

The towering lie of the publicist's uninvolvement in a story is built on a foundation of small, necessary mendacities. At junkets, it's mostly Dale Carnegie stuff: the publicist reminds her client to parrot the themes from the studio's "cheat sheet," to establish familiarity with the interviewer's market ("The last time I was in Nome . . ."), to use the interviewer's name and ask what she thinks, and to seem fascinated by even the most inane or parochial questions ("It's funny, Gertie, I was just thinking we should have had more polar-bear scenes . . .").

A journalist who calls a publicist hoping for five minutes of a star's time quickly learns that "she's spending time with her family / shooting in Europe / scouting in Japan" all mean the same thing: she was just chatting on the cell phone for an hour with me, but she sure doesn't want to talk to you. "He's transitioning" means he got fired, and "He's suffering from exhaustion" means he was found wandering naked in the street, waving a gun. Likewise, "It's in turnaround" means a project is dead; "It's a work in progress" or "They're doing a few pickup shots" or "The print isn't finished but you can see the script" means the movie is a disaster; and "The film is not for everybody" means it's not for anybody. Outright lies have their place, too. One well-known publicist told me, "If a newspaper calls to check a negative story about my client and it's true, my first response is flat-out denial. Then I have the attorneys send a 'we'll sue' letter."

THE LAST HOURS OF LAÓDIKÊ, SISTER OF HEKTOR

Cold missiles and a rain
of embers accompany the men
who slide like shadows into the city
faces mud-smeared
stones for teeth no eyes

who slit the throats of everyone
they encounter until breaking down
my door they drag me into the darkness
that floods the corridor
and lock me in an icy chamber

where a torch of thorns sputters
and a man more bone than flesh
is playing music old
as time itself on a flute
and a girl clutching her knees

burns with fever before I apply
a square of moonlight to her brow
before she whispers her name
my name
both of us falling now

the room falling too and the city
and no one to hear our cries
just the dead waiting in a bottomless canyon
and the sound relentless
of the gods grinding this world to dust

—*Nicholas Christopher*

In Bumble Ward's zeal to represent her clients, she often ends up undermining a studio's publicity plan, sometimes damaging relations with executives whose next picture she might find herself promoting. A while back, Ward's client Stephen Gaghan, who wrote the screenplay for "Traffic," needed to get his share of the attention. But Ward had a problem: Gaghan had always said that the reason he was able to write convincingly about drugs was that he had interviewed hundreds of addicts; in fact, the film's most wrenching moments were based on his own years of drug use. (Gaghan wanted to come clean, but USA Films had warned him that if he revealed his personal story it would distract people, a situation known as "getting out in front of the film.") Ward was concerned that his history would leak out eventually, and salaciously, in the tabloid press. Ward thought that the *Times* reporter Rick Lyman would handle the story well, and she e-mailed a pitch to the paper's deputy culture editor, Martin Gottlieb: "I can see the headlines now—'JUNKIE CRACKHEAD SURVIVES HIS YOUTH AND GOES ON TO WIN GOLDEN GLOBE FOR FILM ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE!!' Thank God Marty got it," she says. "He wrote back asking just how sensational the story was, saying that grass and coke are no big deal but heroin and crack might be something."

In early February of 2001, Lyman published a sympathetic story about Gaghan's struggles with heroin and crack. Many of Gaghan's Hollywood colleagues complimented him on the timing of his disclosure—it appeared during the ten-day period between the end of balloting for the Academy Award nominations and the announcement of the nominees, the perfect window in which to curry favor with voters without appearing to do so. Ward had considered that angle, too. Gaghan won the Oscar for best adapted screenplay.

One morning, at work in her office on Wilshire Boulevard, Bumble Ward was "rolling calls"—she left five messages in ninety seconds—popping B vitamins, checking her Palm Pilot, and batting out replies to some of the two hundred e-mails she receives each day. An editor from *Interview* called Ward to ask if Quentin Tarantino would write a little piece on New Wave cinema for the magazine's French issue. "It's not that Mr. T. is not enthusiastic," Ward told her caller, twirling her hair. "He'd totally love to do it, but he's in script development for two more months. The other person you could think about—it's not quite as exciting a name, I suppose—is Roger Avary," a lesser-known director (the forthcoming "The Rules of Attraction"), who is also a Ward client. This was a textbook example of the way a publicist can leverage her list to create a win-win: "Tom Hanks can't make the benefit, but I have Mena Suvari in town!"

After she hung up, Ward explained that Tarantino's new script, "Kill Bill," was finished but that it wasn't the right moment, in the long spin cycle of his career, for him to be too visible. For Tarantino's early movies, of course, Ward practically rang doorbells to announce his talent. "I always wanted to be famous as a filmmaker," Tarantino told me later, "so I wouldn't need to pimp out a star to get a movie going, but could get a green light on my own, the way Spielberg and Hitchcock and Kubrick could. 'Pulp Fiction' had won the Palme d'Or at Cannes, but Bumble kicked it all up to another level, setting up media screenings, TV interviews, and great magazine profiles. I could see my progress, from being the last guy on the 'Tonight Show,' in the same spot as the guy with the iguana, to guest No. 2, and then guest No. 1. Bumble helped make me one of the most famous directors in the world."

But then it turned. After seeing "Pulp Fiction," Warren Beatty told him, "Next year, the press is going to kick your ass. They'll find some angle, and I predict it will be 'Drunk with power.'" Tarantino continued, "He was right, but they also worked in the 'dangerously close to overexposed' angle and the idea that I was a 'master at self-promotion.' Suddenly, I had the green-light power I'd always wanted, but everyone thought I was this arrogant prick!"

Once Tarantino had become world famous, Ward stopped pitching him and started protecting him. She tried to soften stories about his weight gain, his breakup with Mira Sorvino, the terrible reviews he got as an actor, and his penchant for bar fights. Tarantino says he was delighted with Ward's handling of his 1997 arrest for slugging the producer Don Murphy at a West Hollywood restaurant: "She told everyone"—he adopted her pearly accent, as Ward's clients often do—" 'We can't really comment, but make sure you note that Quentin was the victor.' Best publicity I ever had."

Not long ago, people in Hollywood started whispering that Tarantino, whose last film, "Jackie Brown," came out in 1997, was washed up. "Everyone began saying 'What's he doing?' and thinking he was a recluse," Ward told me. "So to satisfy that curiosity we had him do one of those 'Watching Movies With' pieces in the Friday *Times*. And then we locked him up again."

Bebe Lerner dropped in to see Ward. The office suite, with its robin's-egg-blue walls and sisal-covered floors, has an informal Caribbean feel, and Ward's publicists, all women, stop by her office every few minutes. Ward mentioned that a charity for runaway children wanted the actor Vincent D'Onofrio, a client, to personally prepare a Christmas basket for its auction, and that Lerner should do D'Onofrio's personal preparing. When Lerner left (to pass D'Onofrio's personal preparing on to her own assistant), Ward called her client Tony Kaye to cheer him up. Kaye, a British director of commercials, hasn't been able to get work in film since he made "American History X," starring Edward Norton, in 1998. Kaye couldn't stop tinkering with his movie, a story about white-power losers, and New Line finally released its own version. In response, the director took out thirty ads in the trades attacking New Line; brought a rabbi, a priest, and a Tibetan monk to a meeting at the studio to mediate the dispute; and sought, unsuccessfully, to replace his name in the credits with "Humpty Dumpty."

During this period, Kaye fired Ward and replaced her with a "crisis expert" called Steve. But Ward remained loyal, and is now back on her standard retainer of five thousand dollars a month. (Of the company's seventy-five clients—who include writers, actors, and films, in addition to directors—only about twenty-five keep Ward on retainer at a given time; usually, a director hires her for the six months before a film is released.) That week, Ward had coaxed *Entertainment Weekly* into writing about Kaye, and in the fall she would plant in the gossip columns the news of his wildly unpopular standup-comedy sets (he was telling jokes dressed as Osama bin Laden).

On the phone, Ward told Kaye, "Mike De Luca's at DreamWorks now, and he says he loves you." De Luca was the New Line executive in charge of "American History X."

Kaye muttered, "That's just his . . ."

"Patter?"

"Yes. I mean, I wouldn't want to work with me again if I was him," Kaye said. (De Luca later told me, laughing, "I never professed my love for Tony Kaye.")

After she'd hung up, Ward explained, "I'm trying to show the industry that Tony is still here. Tony is crazy and fantastic and Hollywood is scared of him, of how he uses publicity as an artistic medium. It's a town of canyons and coyotes, packs of coyotes who get each other howling. But I like the lone wolves like Tony." Her eyes were shining. "He's sweet, and misunderstood, and something about him almost makes me want to cry."

Most of Ward's clients are men, and the centerpiece of the firm's conference room is a vivid painting entitled "Male Aggression Now Playing Everywhere," which depicts a naked man with a club, a knife, a gun, and other weaponry springing from his genital area.

"I have this ridiculous need to help people," Ward said, "particularly very difficult, troubled, artistic men. I don't know why." She made a face and laughed. "I *do* know why. It's because of my dad. He was all the things you imagine an Englishman to be—so very awkward about expressing any emotion or vulnerability," she said, spinning slowly in her chair. "I was born when he was fifty, and he was twenty-four years older than my Norwegian mother, who was his au pair after he divorced his first wife. So it's like 'The Sound of Music,' only my mother is tone-deaf."

Ward grew up in Aldbury, a small village in Hertfordshire. After graduating with a degree in philosophy from Manchester College, in Oxford, she followed her boyfriend, John Moshay, to Los Angeles, where she worked at a number of entertainment-P.R. agencies. She did two stints with Harry Clein, who taught her the publicist's mantra: always carry change (for pay phones); never valet-park (slows you down); don't sleep with clients (duh); and, if you do, use the change to call the office (information is power).

Ward married Moshay in 1988, and they have two children, aged twelve and seven. Ward's firm represents Moshay's firm, DNA Studio, which does Web design and marketing, and the family lives in a rambling Asian-style house in Laurel Canyon. In 1994, with Tarantino as her calling card (the two had grown close after Ward worked for another P.R. firm on his film "Reservoir Dogs"), Ward started her own company in her garage, and word of mouth soon brought more clients. Every July 5th, she hosts a picnic at her house, and her favorite directors loll around in their swimsuits, like the Lost Boys with Wendy.

In her office, Ward called an editor named Kelly Scott, at the Los Angeles *Times'* Sunday Calendar section, to pitch her client Clive Barker. Ward was determined to broaden Barker's image beyond that of a horror writer, and she was also pitching him to *Vanity Fair*. "Clive's 'Abarat' quartet is going to be made into a series of children's movies," Ward said. "I'm quoting a Disney executive: 'It's our "Star Wars."' I mean, this is going to be very, very big. Would you be interested in coming up to his house and having a look at his universe? We haven't talked to anybody else about this—he wanted to do Calendar because he lives here. . . . Super! Lovely!"

Ward hung up and called the director Tony Scott, a longtime client, whose film "Spy Game" was about to be released. "His assistant called last week to de-hire me," she whispered, as she waited on hold. Scott got on the line. "I know you hate P.R., Tony, but here's my pitch," Ward said. "It's all about having someone represent your interests behind the scenes. The buzz is already starting, and you have two high-profile producers who will get the credit." She lowered her voice. "Everyone at Universal is saying it may be an Awards movie." She nodded, hung up, and spun her chair in a circle. "We're back on, starting next month!"

Being a Hollywood publicist sounds glamorous. Young women—and a few young men—are drawn by the notion of seeing movies three months early, of swanning around at Cannes, of ordering foie gras from room service at the Ritz, of knowing Matt Damon's gate code.

"Publicists fill the huge vacuum of insecurity out here," John Calley, the head of Sony Pictures, told me. "They don't write, direct, create, or produce—they interpret moods and respond to them. What you, the star, hear from the publicist is 'Everybody else is trying to exploit you, but I'm the one who cares. I have a huge talent list, but you just happen to be my favorite. I'll sit at the lunch with the evil press person who's trying to trap you, to humiliate you. Your kid needs babysitting? I'll do it. Dry cleaning? I love picking up dry cleaning. I'm here twenty-four hours a day. I'll devote my whole life to you. I'll steer you, I'll save you, I'll make you famous forever!'" He smiled. "Bullshit."

Taken as a whole, the publicist's life is one of mundane and ceaseless anxiety. When I had lunch with one publicist at Orso in Beverly Hills, we were seated at a table next to Tobey Maguire and his co-star in "Spider-Man," Kirsten Dunst, who was not wearing makeup. "If I were Kirsten's publicist," this publicist said, "I'd be losing sleep about a photographer coming in here. What is the brand liability of having a pimply-faced photo out there?"

The paradox of publicity is that its greatest achievements are thwartings. Publicists become powerful only if they selectively refuse to publicize. A star like Julia Roberts on a magazine cover can increase newsstand sales by as much as fifty per cent—but Roberts is alluring only to the degree that she is inaccessible. If she were meeting fans at the local Arby's every night, she would drain the lake of public longing and cease to be a star.

The publicist who most fully embodies the role of barrier is Pat Kingsley, the head of PMK/HBH. She represents Tom Cruise, Al Pacino, and Jodie Foster, among many others, but she uses her considerable reserves of charm and humor to downplay her clout. "One of the first people I ever worked with was Doris Day, who was then a huge star," she told me, sitting majestically in an armchair at her firm's Los Angeles office. Her voice was soothing, with a hint of North Carolina twang. "*Life* wanted to do a whole issue about Doris turning forty, and I thought, My first *Life* cover! But Doris said, 'Why would I want to do that?' I said, 'Because you're No. 1.' And she said, 'Then what's the point?' I said, 'Would you do it as a favor to me?' And she said, 'No.'" Kingsley laughed.

Now Kingsley rebuffs media requests so often and with such zeal that she is known as Dr. No. "Pat Kingsley cares nothing about journalism," Lynn Hirschberg, a contributing writer for the *Times Magazine*, says. "She would give Annie Leibovitz days"—to shoot the star's photos—"and give you an hour."

"The public is not nearly as curious about stars as the press is," Kingsley said. "They just like to see nice pictures. So two hours, total, should be sufficient for a profile—but I usually say an hour and a half. Some writers like to get close and nail the celebrity. Not on my watch!" She wagged her finger at me, as if I might be one of those writers. "Our only power is controlling access to our client," she said. "Once the press gets access, we lose that power."

To secure that access, magazines often employ a specialist known as a celebrity wrangler. The wrangler negotiates with publicists about who the writer and photographer will be, how much time will be allotted to each, and a variety of other conditions. For example, when Jennifer Lopez agreed to do a cover shoot for *Premiere* to promote her film "The Cell," she insisted that the magazine provide her entourage with Diptyque scented candles, fried chicken, and eight bottles of Cristal champagne. "I've even had publicists ask if they can read the story ahead of time," Jim Meigs, the former editor of *Us* and *Premiere*, told me. (He always refused.) "When a magazine is launching or struggling, publicists make a lot of demands. They're the wolf pack that follows the caribou herd, looking for the weak cub or the sickly old bull."

A writer who publishes anything but a glowing profile will often be told that he is "banned for life" from interviewing that publicist's other clients. (The bans usually last about six months.) Tom Junod, of *Esquire,* was universally shunned after he more or less outed Kevin Spacey in 1997, and Lynn Hirschberg was frozen out by many publicists in 1992 because she hinted, in a piece for *Vanity Fair*, that Courtney Love might have used drugs during her pregnancy. PMK once ostracized Chris Heath simply because, on assignment for *Us*, he asked Ralph Fiennes one too many questions about his leather pants.

Sometimes the media tries to turn the tables. The "Today" show banned Kingsley's clients in 1999 after a particularly acrimonious dispute over access and power. Two NBC executives say the imbroglio began when Calista Flockhart was booked to talk about her film "A Midsummer Night's Dream." "This was when she was really thin," one executive said, "and PMK called and said, 'You can't bring up Calista's weight.' " NBC refused to comply, PMK pulled her, and "Today" didn't feature the movie. "A few months later," the executive said, "PMK told us that we could do 'Eyes Wide Shut.' It was all set. Then Pat called and said, 'Because of the Calista thing, you are not going to get to interview Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman.' Pat's notorious for doing this. It's her way or no way. In this case, it was our way or no way. Jeff Zucker"—the show's executive producer—"banned her clients." Another NBC executive says that the show received numerous letters from people in the industry saying, "Good for you! Finally!"

Kingsley, who recalls the incident somewhat differently, insists that the dispute didn't diminish her power but, rather, demonstrated it. "I took the heat," she said serenely. "And that was fine, because it made Calista seem O.K. She's still a client." Last year, after Jeff Zucker left the "Today" show, Cruise was invited back to the program to promote "Vanilla Sky." In the end, the show needed the star more than the star needed the show.

When publicists do grant interviews, they make sure that their clients know the rules. On talk shows, for instance, let David Letterman get the laughs, and ignore the fact that Jay Leno never makes eye contact, because you shouldn't look at Leno, either. Sit back on the chair, clench your buttocks, and face the camera. If you're wearing a short skirt and you cross your legs, the top leg will look fat, so you should hold it an inch above the other thigh. Have your publicist inspect your teeth for food particles before you go on. If you have tiny teeth, never smile, and turn away from the camera when you laugh.

Talk shows "pre-interview" guests to elicit good anecdotes, which is why the host will say, "Now, someone was telling me that you were on a dude ranch?" "Middle America can't relate to a story about you in your movie trailer," one publicist said. "So you pretend you don't have three assistants and a chef, a limo, a plane. No, no, no. You tell a laundry story, bring yourself down to the level of everyone else—I'm clumsy, bad at math, can't deal with insects." For the same reason, stars usually meet with journalists in a hotel room or a production office. Terry Press, the head of marketing at DreamWorks SKG, explains, "If your image is the Everyman, like Tom Hanks and Jeff Bridges, then letting somebody into your twenty-million-dollar home ruins it."

One evening last October, Bumble Ward leaned down and opened the rear door of a ten-yard limousine. Out stepped Iain Softley, the director of "K-PAX," which was premièring at the Mann Village Theatre, in Westwood. His entourage followed, a quartet dressed in black. They pretended to ignore the throngs, as if they had just popped out for a smoke. "Couldn't you get a bigger car?" Ward asked Softley, a grizzled Englishman. He gave her a sleepy look. She led him to where Ron Meyer and Larry Gordon were waiting; the three men shook hands and smiled, and faced the paparazzi, who jostled behind the velvet ropes. "Photo for the trades," Ward explained. "Head of the studio, producer, director." Then she led Softley up the red carpet, to a riser where "Entertainment Tonight" was interviewing Jeff Bridges, one of the film's stars. Softley was on next.

A première is the crowning event of a studio's publicity campaign, the last chance to "event-ize" a movie. Last summer, "Pearl Harbor" 's première was held aboard an aircraft carrier in Hawaii and featured five hundred journalists, two thousand guests, parachuting Navy SEALs, and a twenty-minute fireworks display. The splashiest premières cost a million dollars; this one cost more than five million. The "K-PAX" première had only thirteen hundred guests, but Iain Softley still had to stop every three steps to accommodate the photographers, who yelled as they clicked, hoping for a head-on glance: "Iain! Iain! Iain! Hey, Mr. Handsome! Iain! Ah, fuck you, Iain!" Bumble Ward floated a yard behind Softley; her ear or her sandal has appeared at the edge of hundreds of photos in *People*, *Women's Wear Daily*, and *Variety*. After the photographers came a gantlet of domestic television outlets, domestic print outlets, and international outlets. Stars usually answer two questions from each major outlet, and it can take them an hour to walk the carpet.

"All publicists out of the way—keep the carpet clear!" a supervisor wearing a headset yelled as Kevin Spacey, one of the movie's stars, began his processional. Ward

"Here's to missing the big picture."

and the other publicists scattered. In the film, Spacey plays a man who is either from a faraway galaxy or insane, and his fixed grin this evening gave credence to both possibilities. When he mounted the "Access Hollywood" riser, Spacey spied Haley Joel Osment, his young co-star from "Pay It Forward," over on the "E!" riser. "Haley!" he shouted. Osment waved from his island, twenty yards away, and every camera turned to catch this natural moment, so the stars kept on waving.

Ward led Softley past Larry King, who had cupped a hand to his huge head in order to hear a shouted question, and up to the reporter from *Entertainment Weekly*, who wanly delivered his query of the night: "Are you a believer in outer-space visitors?"

"Like most people I know," Softley said, "I believe and I don't believe."

"Very controversial," Ward murmured, and Softley grinned as she eased him down the line, keeping her right hand on the small of his back, as if she were a dance instructor. As he answered another question, Ward looked around, bored. Premières are publicity in its most elemental form: all arrivals and fashions and klieg lights, with no emphasis on the work itself. (Once the lights in the theatre dim, the director and actors usually leave.) "I often think, Which job is more humiliating?" Ward said as she waited. "Is it standing there with a microphone, asking celebrities stupid questions, or standing there like an idiot with your client, pretending you're steering him through this incredibly scary row of media? Some of my moments of clarity have come from seeing Pat Kingsley—this very strong, proud, older woman—waiting and waiting and then opening the limo door. The idea of being caught in the swirly vortex of publicity until I'm Pat's age is so horrific."

"You're always opening limousine doors," Kingsley told me later. "Is it menial? Yeah. No client ever carries a banner saying, 'Look what my publicist did for me!' It's all reflected glory." She looked at the ceiling. "But inside I'm kind of winning those awards, too."

The morning after the "K-PAX" première, Ward got a call at her office from an executive at Universal who told her that the previous night's media screening, in New York, hadn't gone well. "Joel Siegel, Peter Travers, and a number of other critics all hate it," Ward told Sylvia Desrochers, one of her junior publicists.

"And Rex Reed," said Desrochers, who had been working the phones.

"Fuck!" Ward said. "Even Rex Reed?"

"I'm not surprised," Desrochers said. "The last half spirals into sappiness."

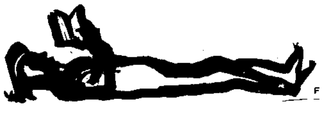
Ward phoned the critic Bob Campbell, who had also been at the screening. When she got off the phone, she said, "He called it 'Absolute bullshit from beginning to end, pseudo-West Coast bullshit.' Am I the only one who doesn't think this film is sappy?"

Ward took a deep breath and called Softley. "Here's the thing," she began. "We're beginning to get reactions from the New York critics, and they're not good. It's a critic thing, not a writer thing—we've had lovely reactions on the West Coast. But they feel the depiction of insanity is incorrect. . . . I know. I know. I know it is. Believe me, Iain. We're still calling, and there will be some bright spots. There's a piece coming out in the L.A. *Times,* about how films treat insanity, that quotes the film's psych consultant, and we'll work to get one in the New York *Times* about insanity, et cetera."

She put the phone down and stared at it. Her face was bright red. "I take this way too personally, and not just because I can't do anything about it. It makes me start doubting my taste. And isn't that the point of life, to trust your intuitions?"

Desrochers went out, and Ward and I began talking, again, about her greatest professional achievement: Quentin Tarantino. "After 'Pulp Fiction,' the word 'Tarantinoesque' was in every article," she said. "And then everyone was sick of him—*he* was sick of him. You work to put someone on a pedestal, and then the world delights in tearing him down."

This summer, Tarantino began shooting "Kill Bill," a kung-fu epic, in Beijing. After five years of silence, will Tarantino be able to come back? Ten magazines have interview requests in—a situation Ward calls "a political nightmare"—and the *Times* recently ran two articles about the movie in ten days: one negative (which Ward tried to kill) and one positive (which the studio, Miramax, engineered, thereby landing Ward in hot water with the Los Angeles *Times,* which had a piece in the works). Rising above the turmoil, Ward insists that Tarantino's script is fantastic, and promised that all the doubters "will shut the hell up when they see the movie."



To the untutored ear, she sounds equally upbeat about John Stockwell's new film, "Blue Crush." His movie about girl surfers in Hawaii had a budget of twenty-five million dollars, more than twice the cost of "Crazy/Beautiful." Stockwell is moving up. "The film hits its demographic—teen-agers—right on," Ward said. "It's a sweet, romantic film that made me want to take my clothes off and jump on a surfboard." Decoded—the absence of "lovely"s and "fantastic"s is noteworthy—this means that she thinks "Blue Crush" is no big deal. It opened last month, amid a storm of publicity, to decent reviews and middling profits.

But not all of Ward's accounts are so steady—or so emotionally satisfying. Last winter, Ward's reluctant client Tony Scott failed to show up for an interview with the *Times*, leaving her angry and embarrassed. In January, Ward dropped Michael Bay when he insisted on publicizing his lawsuit against a stockbroker for his multimillion-dollar losses. And she was shaken by a client who fired her because she couldn't get him into *Vanity Fair's* Oscar party, and by another client, who bawled her out over the car phone because he thought she was paying more attention to her children, in the back seat, than to him. "You sound like you think I'm a piece of shit," the director shouted. "Am I a piece of shit? Am I?"

For the past few months, Ward has been taking Friday afternoons off to work on a novel, set in Los Angeles, about a woman who tries to discover herself through her friendships with men. She doesn't think it's any good, really, but she's enjoying the writing. "I once said that I don't want to be doing publicity when I'm forty, and I'm thirty-nine," she told me. "I see myself helping all these people and not helping myself. The truth is . . ." She thought for a moment, and then spoke as no publicist would have advised her to do: "The truth is I'd rather be doing something else." ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

NURSERY NEWS

BY ANDREW BARLOW

School has barely begun and already so much has happened. Thank you to everyone for an eventful and challenging year so far.

MUSIC HELPS THE HEART GROW: The theme that your children selected for this month's enrichment unit is "Music All Around Us." (The title was actually chosen by Miss Paula, who adapted it from the students' suggestion, "Pokémon.") Maybe you've noticed some of the unusual sounds emanating from our activities room. Your kids are acquiring fresh appreciation for "sounding off" on pots and pans and the wood part of our piano. Our morning sing-alongs have shown that music can reach even the shyest youngster, Bernard. We are requesting the following materials for the program: shoeboxes, macaroni, empty baby-food jars, earplugs—whatever you can spare.

THANK YOU: Thank you to the moms who brought us newspapers and pasta shells for last term's Mother's Day art project. The results, as many of you suggested, were mixed. Likewise, thank you, Mrs. Ventura, for replenishing our first-aid kit. You have no idea how much this means to us and the kids, especially William.

ANIMAL FRIENDS: After the death of Mr. Furry last week, we have been keeping a watchful eye on Sparkles, the school's other pet bunny rabbit. We are unsure about what caused the disappearance and then the grossly unacceptable reappearance of Mr. Furry on Wednesday, but any parent with special knowledge of foul play should report to us.

IN THE CLASSROOM: Here's what the children are working on.

Shark Group (ages four and five): "Folks in Our Community." What does a police officer do? What do firefighters do? What does a firefighter wear? Why did the Fire Department have to come last week? Why is it important to let Miss Nadine be in charge of the candles on Cupcake Day?

Pokémon Group (ages two and three): Funeral services for Mr. Furry.

GOODBYE, MRS. PILSTON: Dorothy Pilston, our nurse at the school for nine years, is missing. We began to worry when she didn't come to work for three days last week and was unreachable at home. Miss Jenny's four-year-olds formed a search party to find Mrs. Pilston, but the effort was unsuccessful and their methods not systematic. Many of you may not know that it was Dorothy who instituted our annual Invertebrates Gala. Dottie, bon voyage.

PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS: To spare ourselves such meeting-time outcries as "Is everybody O.K.?" and "What do you mean, 'hostages'?," we will establish a priority list for mishaps, to be addressed at parent-teacher meetings. List No. 1: Hazing. Students fighting during last week's fire. Excessive taunting during "The Cheese Stands Alone." Attempts to form juntas. Please join us on October 15th and find out who's doing what: names will be named.

ODDS AND ENDS: This newsletter will be seeing some changes. The "Kids Say the Nuttiest Things" and "That's Toddlers for Ya!" sections have been discontinued. Two new features, "Naptime Observations" and "Police Blotter," will replace them, beginning next month. We will also be opening our reconstructed rumpus room.

Already, it's been a difficult year, and more excitement is planned. Our field trip to the juvenile-detention center is still on for next week. Thank you for your promptness in returning permission slips for that event.

Treasure these days. ♦

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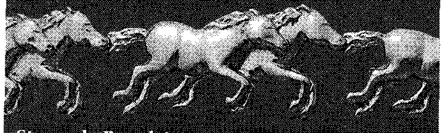

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THE SPORTING SCENE

GUTTER MOUTH

Pete Weber wants to make bowling the new wrestling.

BY BEN McGRATH

If you met Pete Weber, you'd never guess that he is "the loudest, most controversial and successful athlete you don't know," as ESPN's "SportsCenter" has called him. He is five feet seven and a hundred and forty pounds soaking wet, with a neatly trimmed mustache and thick, swept-back brown hair that's just starting to go gray. He looks like an electronics salesman. And, by some people's standards, he doesn't even play a sport: he bowls. Weber recorded his first 200 game at the age of eight, and his first 300 game at twelve. He dropped out of school to turn professional at seventeen. By 1989, as a twenty-six-year-old, Weber had earned a million dollars in record-breaking time; now forty, he is second all time in career earnings, with $2.4 million, and he's first in victories. But if you were to sit next to him in a bar, let's say in the Kansas City suburb of Raytown, Missouri, you might find him telling you, "I don't do much strenuous activity. That's just not my style." Then he'd probably drag on a cigarette before adding, "Now, hunting—I want to know what those guys do to stay in shape."

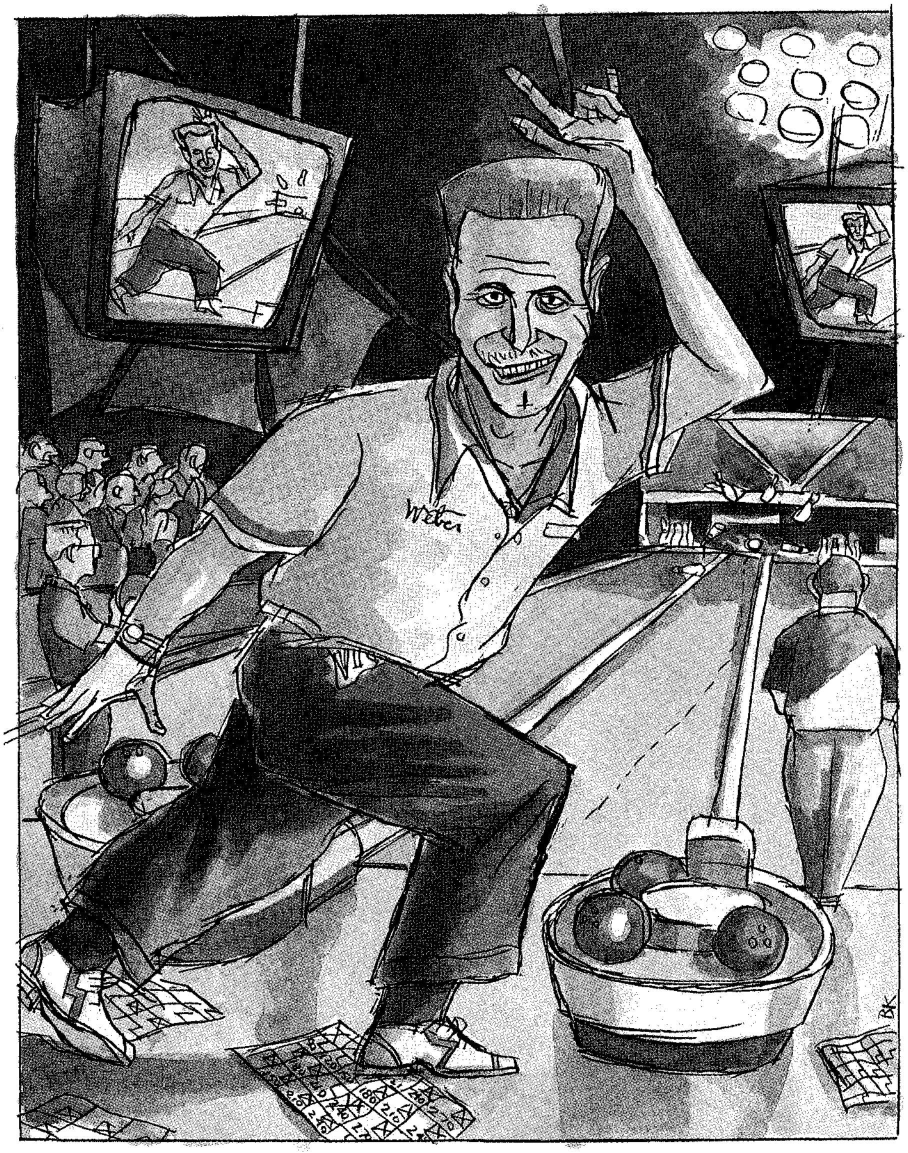
Weber's style, as a bowler, looks something like this: he begins his approach way over on the left, and takes five quick, almost mincing steps, his right arm reaching back well above his shoulder, before attacking the foul line with a mini-hop that leaves his left foot pointing, pigeon-toed, at the junction of the left gutter and the foul line—but only for a second, because soon he's drifting right, just like his ball. The ball, travelling slower than the high backswing might suggest, slides ominously toward the right-hand gutter, until, about ten feet from the pit, it appears to stop for an instant, then bites and hooks sharply, back into the pocket. The pins explode—they don't just fall—with a hollow *thwock*. Weber is a self-described "tweener," which means that he's neither a straight bowler (a misnomer; every pro throws some form of curve) nor a dead-hook bowler. But when the conditions are right—when the oil on the lane is giving him the reaction he needs, and if he likes "the characteristics of the house"—there is no one whose ball flirts with the gutter in the same time-stopping manner as Weber's. "I can do pretty much to a bowling ball what I really want to do with it," he says. "And to be successful, to be great in this game, you got to be able to finagle the bowling ball."

But it is Weber's other style—he likes loud shirts and gold chains, and wears sunglasses indoors—that has lately brought him, and bowling, a great deal of attention. This style accounts for why Weber is no longer able to sit in an airport bar, hundreds of miles from home, wearing a hooded sweatshirt, a hat, and his shades, and watch a golf tournament on TV without being accosted by camera-wielding fans. Around cameras, especially television cameras, Pete becomes someone named P.D.W. (his initials). P.D.W. isn't entirely unlike Pete Weber, but, in the words of his alter ego, he's "a little more colorful." He speaks in the third person: "That's right, and it's Pee Dee Dubya!" He taunts his opponents: "You better bring it!" He expends more calories after his throws—with fist pumps, spread-armed beckonings, knee-dives, full-on collapses—than during them. And he has a signature move—a crotch-directed hand gesture, punctuated by a slight pelvic thrust—that you never saw on the old Saturday-afternoon bowling show with Chris Schenkel. P.D.W. acts more like a professional wrestler, in other words, than like a bowler.

Even wrestlers have noticed the similarity. "I know the W.W.F. has caught wind of the Pee Dee Dubya," he told me recently. "I got feedback from them. A couple of guys that I know that work at arenas where the W.W.F. goes, they've heard a few things from a couple of the guys—'Hey, did you catch Pee Dee Dubya on TV the other day?' " Weber has a dry, barroom drawl that becomes more nasal and high-pitched when he gets excited. "You know, to me that's a big deal, because I don't think those guys watch bowling."

Pro bowling used to be hugely popular. Its governing organization, the Professional Bowlers Association, was founded in 1958, in the banquet hall of a Syracuse hotel, when a lawyer named Eddie Elias persuaded thirty-three of the nation's top bowlers to contribute fifty dollars each toward a communal pot. By 1962, the P.B.A. had a national TV contract, and the Schenkel show, which aired as a lead-in to ABC's "Wide World of Sports," was born. Its first star, who set a record by finishing in the money at every event he entered that year, was a personable St. Louis native named Dick Weber. Weber (who happens to be P.D.W.'s father) was an Arnold Palmer figure; he won at least one P.B.A. title in every decade, through the nineties. His competitive but understated manner helped set the tone for the professional tour, and for bowling generally.

Dick Weber was a perfect fit for the P.B.A., which aimed to project a family-man image, in which the pros, with their paunches and their elastic-waist pants, differed in skill but not in style from ordinary guys rolling a few strings in their Wednesday-night leagues. Players were required to tuck in their shirts and keep their hair trimmed, and a prospective pro needed three letters of recommendation. In the early days of television, this model was extremely successful: throughout the sixties and into the mid-seventies, Schenkel's show was consistently among the most watched sports programs in America. But twenty years later the P.B.A. was still being run, virtually unchanged, out of an office in Eddie Elias's home town of Akron, Ohio, and bowling fans were aging right along with Dick Weber (who is now seventy-two). When the ABC contract finally expired, in 1997, two-thirds of the sport's viewing audience was over fifty years old. At the turn of the millennium, the P.B.A. was on the verge of bankruptcy.

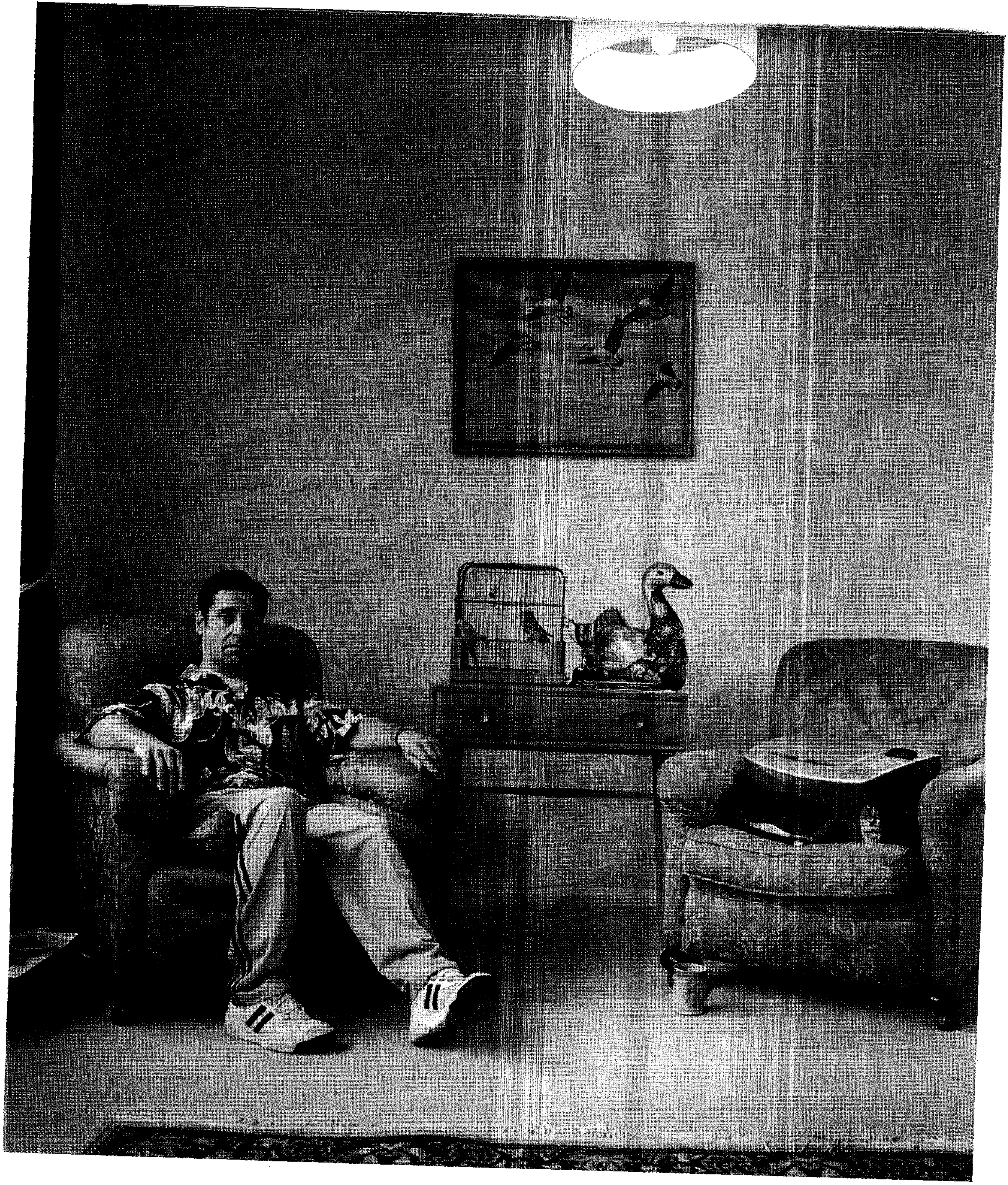


Weber is in many ways a natural for the role of the P.B.A.'s bad-boy savior.

BEN KATCHOR

Chris Peters, a programmer at Microsoft, was busy writing code for Windows 1.0 as the P.B.A. began its slow roll into oblivion. In 1998, he quit his job—at thirty-nine, he was young by P.B.A. standards, but old for a Silicon Valley executive—and decided that he "wanted to get more physically fit and start working out." Naturally, he chose bowling. In true nerd fashion, though, he soon became more interested in the public's lack of respect for bowlers with 215 averages than in improving his own 160 average; he called the P.B.A. office in Akron and offered to "help steer the ship." Why, among other things, was its Web site still being run out of a member's den? When Peters tells this story, a familiar dot-com pattern emerges: Bowling seemed "kind of cool," and serving on the board might be "fun," even "emotionally gratifying." Before long, however, the phrase "media company" enters the picture, "stock options" are being doled out, and "classic liquidity strategies" become the principal concern. So in the spring of 2000, with help from two of his Microsoft pals, Rob Glaser and Mike Slade, Peters bought the whole show—not just a tournament, or a bowling complex, but the entire league and everything that comes with it. They scooped up bowling for about five million bucks and moved it to Seattle.

The Microsoft guys, as they're known on the tour, negotiated an ESPN contract and then set about "building the product"—shelving forty-two years' worth of P.B.A. history to reposition the sport as a startup company. Their plan was to capture the "very carefully targeted bottom eighty per cent of the market," and let the upper twenty per cent have their "country club" sports to themselves. So out went the dress code and the grooming requirements. In came a team of Nike marketing whizzes and a new, swooshlike logo. References were tossed aside. More significant, so was etiquette. It was still a good idea to refrain from speaking



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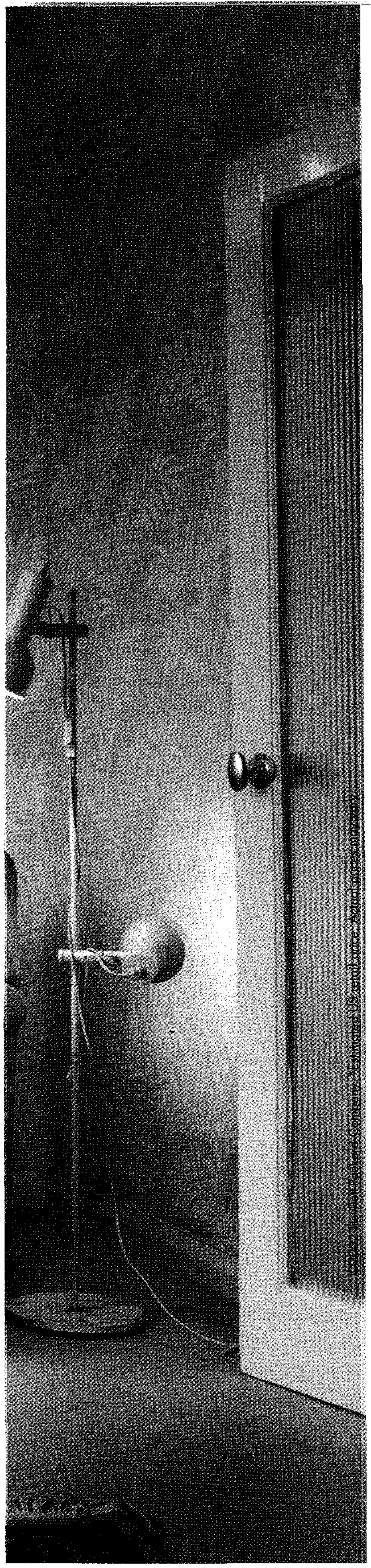

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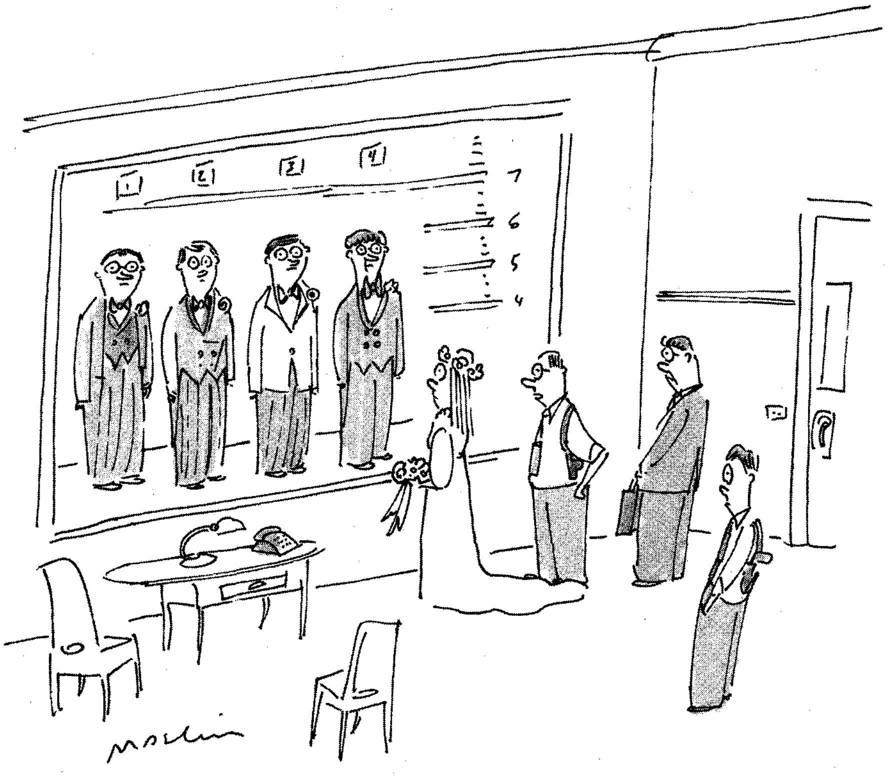
My printer asked if he could go to the copy shop.

He couldn't believe there was a time when people had to drive to a place to scan, copy, fax and print on separate machines.

I sent him a fax that said there was once a time when people couldn't even print their own pictures.

He didn't believe that either.

invent



“Take your time, Mrs. Crimbly. Do you see the man who married you?”

• •

while your opponent was in mid-swing, say, but if you were pissed off about that missed spare and felt that a little razzing would ease the mind, hey, express yourself. Just do it.

P.B.A. 1.0 nonetheless had an inauspicious start. The first telecast was cancelled after the events of September 11th. For the second event, at Landmark Lanes, a bowling center (“alley” is a taboo term among bowling preservationists) in Peoria, Illinois, the tour enlisted Koko Taylor, Queen of the Chicago Blues and the singer of “Wang Dang Doodle,” to perform the national anthem. She sang off key and had trouble with the lyrics. The first bowler, Steve Wilson, threw a gutter ball. The ratings for each of the next two tournaments sank.

Then “lightning struck,” according to league executives. Before the telecast of the Great Lakes Classic, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, last October, Commissioner Ian Hamilton (a Nike recruit) met with the five finalists, Pete Weber included, and reminded them that bowling was more than just sport; it was entertainment.

“He kept looking right at me while he said that, almost like it was a dare,” Weber recalled, months later, in the Raytown bar. “And I thought, You’re daring the *wrong guy*.” Over a steak dinner that night, before the start of the Raytown Open, Weber elaborated. “I’ve watched wrestling since I was ten years old,” he said. “People have criticized me for it. But, man, it’s *entertaining*. And then when the blood starts coming into it . . .” He stopped cutting his Kansas City strip, and grinned. “My dream is to come off the top rope on somebody.” He got up from his chair and, snarling, began kicking his right toe into the carpet. It was an imitation of the Iron Sheik, the Reagan-era wrestling champion. Even in a restaurant, Pete Weber is good at attracting attention.

It didn’t hurt that Weber bowled strikes on each of his first nine frames in the semifinal that October afternoon in Grand Rapids. With each successive strike, his confidence as an entertainer grew. By the tenth frame, the crowd of about three hundred spectators was stamping its feet and chanting, “Pete, Pete, Pete!” Weber struck once, twice, and then, upon releasing his last throw, drifted two full lanes over to the right, in triumphant expectation—and collapsed backward onto the floor, his legs flying over his head before flopping to the side, fishlike, as the No. 4 pin remained standing: 299. Weber struck five more times in a row—“Yeah, that’s right, baby! That’s right, I’m on it now!”—to begin the championship match, and after he’d sealed the win, and the forty-thousand-dollar purse, he made an announcement. “If you guys don’t know it, you want to take a look”—Weber removed his shades and stuck his face closer to the camera. “I’m back, and I am Pee Dee Dubya. I’m back!”

Bowling highlights aren’t replayed on ESPN’s “SportsCenter,” but this performance was. And P.D.W. was just warming up. At his next “show,” in Louisville, Kentucky, just after Thanksgiving, Weber didn’t wait to throw a strike before mugging for the camera. Every chance he got, sitting, waiting, he raised his thumbs and directed them inward: “I am Pee Dee Dubya.” The strikes came, too, followed by escalating trash talk. He took home another forty grand.

In February, P.D.W. made his third television appearance (it was Weber’s hundredth), at the Tar Heel Open, in Burlington, North Carolina. More than a million households tuned in, double the audience of pre-P.D.W. events. In the final frame, Weber missed his target by two boards (there are thirty-nine to a lane), and left a difficult five-pin, “Greek-church” split—two on the left and three on the right. To make the shot, the commentator explained, Weber would have to “get the ball to the right side of the three pin and throw the three over into the four-seven—the ball will take the six-ten out.” Pete pulled it off—he sent the ball screaming down the right side, with a delayed, abbreviated hook that bypassed the pocket—but the technical mastery was secondary to the follow-through. “Get it right there!” Weber shouted, pointing with his hands in a V shape toward his genitals, and chopping sharply, for emphasis. (This is called the “suck-it sign.”) Then he made his way to the audience and slapped a few high-fives, stopping to address the cameras: “Give it up! How about *that* for winning? Take that!”

P.B.A. ratings increased by eighteen per cent last season—and this despite September 11th, which caused a shift away from sports viewing in favor of cable news. With an average viewership of seven hundred and fifteen thousand households, pro bowling is now outgaining the National Hockey League by nearly two-thirds. And, more encouraging for the venture capitalists, bowling's gains have come primarily from the coveted eighteen-to-thirty-four-year-old male demographic—a territory once conceded to the W.W.F. and the N.H.L. The bottom eighty per cent is lining up, and this fall Storm Products will unveil the bowling equivalent of Air Jordans: the P.D.W. ball. It's purple, with fluorescent-yellow letters, and costs two hundred dollars. Attitude not included.

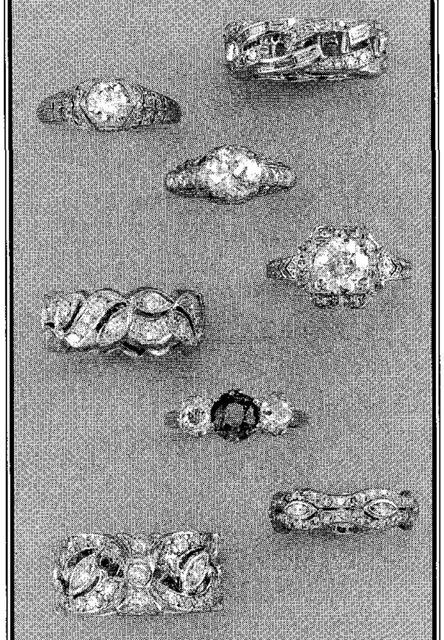
Peter David Weber is in many ways a natural for the role of bad-boy savior; he began auditioning for the part long ago. The youngest of four children, he was born into the indisputable First Family of professional bowling, an insular, almost incestuous community. Like his siblings, Weber grew up bowling, from preschool age, at Dick Weber Lanes, outside St. Louis, home of the International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame. He bowled every day, four hours a day, from the fourth grade until he turned pro. His eldest brother, Rich, had a brief pro career, and now works as a consultant for A.M.F., the bowling-center chain; his brother John is the director of the P.B.A.'s Midwest region; and his sister, Paula, wasn't too shabby herself, though she has renounced the game temporarily, and works outside the industry. Spouses play, too: Pete's wife, Tracy, whom he first met at Dick Weber Lanes when they were both in middle school, has "six sanctioned 300 games." For Christmas last year, Pete gave out scented bowling balls, and his mother, Juanita, made visitors smell hers (grape) before letting them in the house. "She's not a great bowler," Pete says—her high game is a mere 289—"but she loves to bowl because of Dad."

Shortly after turning pro, however, Pete went from prodigy to prodigal son; from Tiger Woods to John Daly. As Jim Dressel, the editor of *Bowlers Journal International*, tells it, "Dick set a very high bar. And in a lot of cases Pete stepped up to that bar and ordered a few extra rounds too many." Pete has now been in and out of rehab four times, and he's been divorced twice. The impulsiveness and self-indulgence were never confined to Weber's off-lane behavior, either. On the lanes, he had a short fuse and a penchant for speaking his mind. When things were going well, he'd give the fans a little "Hulk Hogan muscle flex," as he calls it; when they weren't, he'd complain—often publicly—about the lane conditions. "I tell the truth, and I get smacked for it," he says.

Unfortunately, the old P.B.A. wasn't casting. And, in fact, at the time of the league's corporate overhaul Pete Weber wasn't even eligible for competition. He was serving his fifth suspension, for "conduct unbecoming a professional"—this time, an altercation with an amateur bowler at a tournament in Bay City, Michigan. (Weber doesn't like to talk about his past much, but he has described this dustup as "just one of them things that happened. He said he wanted to kick my ass, so I said, 'Bring it on.' ")

Now that Pete's liabilities have become an asset, the outbursts are a little less spontaneous, a little more practiced. Pete and Tracy's home, in St. Ann, Missouri, serves as an all-or-nothing test market, a personal Peoria, where the Webers engage in pre-tournament role-playing. "He'll say, 'O.K., what if I do this, what if I said this?' " Tracy told me. "And I'll say, 'No, I don't think so.' " Weber remains unconcerned about crossing the line between entertainment and offensiveness; he told me that his bosses "haven't said anything yet, so I guess I'm not close." In an interview on "SportsCenter," Weber mocked his prudish detractors, who have taken their old-P.B.A. crusade to the Internet message boards. " 'Gosh, if he's on next week, I ain't watching,' " he mimicked. "I'm thinking to myself, Yeah, right. You're gonna be watching to see"—he smirked and pointed below his waist—"the *big sign*."

P.D.W. may be a little too bad for corporate comfort. Chris Peters told me that he's "not a huge fan" of the suck-it shtick. And the new P.B.A., for all its talk about self-expression, is in some ways a very conservative organization. However thrilled the league executives are with Weber's entertainment value—and they are; the C.E.O., Steve Miller, compares bowling's luck in having Weber to basketball's in having Michael Jordan—they insist that, ultimately, they want to elevate the game's athletic image. Not to the level of football; Peters was mortified to read an article that implied this, and he made a point of telling me



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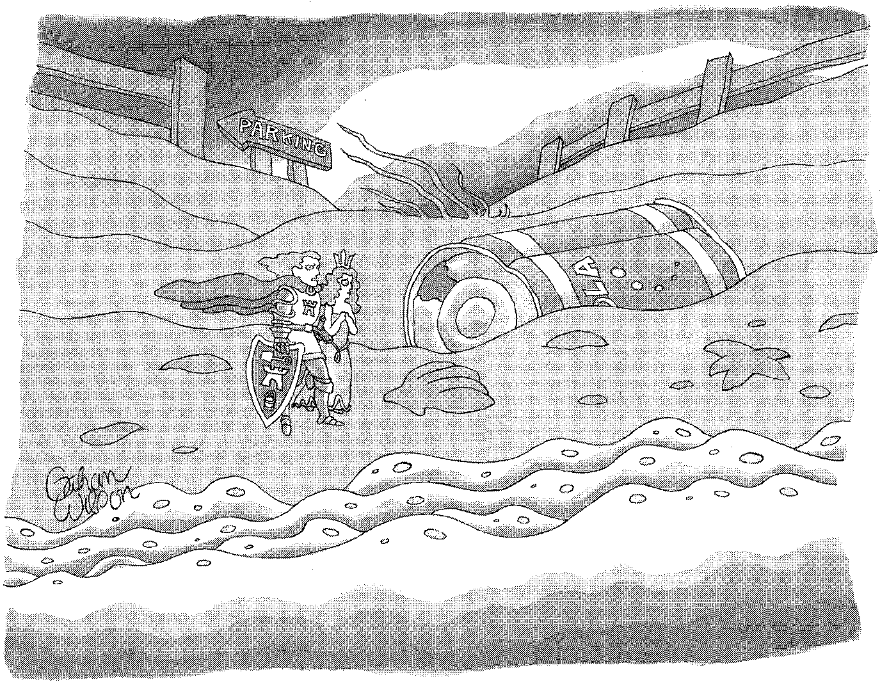
that he recognized that bowling would never be more than a "second-tier sport." But, for now, he believes it's mired somewhere in the third tier, in the company of rodeos and tractor pulls. And with a little more exposure there's no reason it can't catch, and maybe surpass, bass fishing (which, in venture-capital terms, is worth substantially more than bowling, at a reported thirty-three million) and rank with the NASCARs of the world. Wrestling, though a worthy sport in the mind of bowling's superstar ("Let me bash you upside the head with a steel chair and you tell me it's not real," Weber told me), doesn't fit into the P.B.A.'s long-term liquidity strategy.

To win legitimacy, management is striking at the heart of the game's recreational popularity: booze and cigarettes. Citing an "anecdotal spin cycle where people associated weight and cigarette smoking and drinking" with bowling, the P.B.A. has encouraged its members to think of themselves as proper athletes (read: hit the gym) and banned them from smoking or drinking during tournaments. Given that tobacco sales may account for as much as sixteen per cent of the bowling economy, this is a bold move—and not an altogether successful one. I spied a half-smoked butt in the men's room at the tournament in Raytown, and later that day Ritchie Allen, last season's Dallas Open champ, was ejected for sneaking puffs. Beer guts are not quite ubiquitous on the tour, but bowling defenders still point to the Falstaffs of, say, baseball—Babe Ruth, Fernando Valenzuela, David Wells—instead of offering exemplars from their own ranks.

In this context, the hard-drinking, heavy-smoking P.D.W. is the unlikeliest of poster children. Weber's kitchen role-playing sessions with Tracy are about the only preparation he puts into bowling these days. He spends as little time as he can in bowling centers, and unless he's standing on the approach, ball in hand, he tries not to think about bowling at all. "Everyone asks me, 'How do you prepare for bowling?' I don't prepare for bowling until it's time to do it. 'What are you thinking about before you bowl?' What do you want for dinner? Are we going out or are we going to cook in? Until I get up there and it's time to start practicing, I have no thoughts of bowling in my head whatsoever, because I don't need to think about it." He doesn't exercise, except to walk the golf course—which he does, as often as possible, at Bogey Hills Country Club. He's a four handicap.

The problem is, Weber doesn't really like bowling all that much. He likes the competition, the winning, the money, sure. But it's a job. "That's my living. The only way I make money is to bowl," he says. And the act of bowling itself—"You go up, throw the ball, and just turn around, go back, and sit down"—isn't particularly fun for him. "*After* the ball leaves your hand, now, to me, that's fun," he told me. Without the "after," Weber would never have had the satisfaction of meeting Goldberg, the wrestling superstar, as he did recently on the set of Fox's "Best Damn Sports Show Period," before whom he bowed, I'm-not-worthy fashion. Of course, you don't need to bowl to behave like a wrestler. And one suspects that if Weber could make the same money doing something else he probably would. In fact, Weber counts as his greatest accomplishment being asked to participate in the Celebrity Players golf tour, which he did for the first time last May. (For once, he wasn't the main attraction—the N.F.L. running back Marshall Faulk and the sitcom star Ray Romano were there—so he kept his antics to a minimum, and finished thirteen over par for the weekend, good enough for $2,150.)



"Fear not, my princess—the summer will come again, and, with it, the children gladly return to build us new castles in the sand!"

Weber didn't win the tournament in Raytown. He was eliminated, in the round of sixteen, by a regional, or weekend, pro named Jeff Smith, before he hit his stride, and before P.D.W. had made a full appearance. Scarcely more than five minutes after his last hook, Weber was pulling out of the parking lot in his Ford S.U.V. "Bummer" was about all he said when it was over. He didn't even stop to pick up his check, which, for finishing in the top sixteen (out of eighty), was worth four hundred and fifty dollars—just enough to cover the weekend's expenses.

Jeff Smith is a slightly bookish-looking southpaw—he could pass for a Microsoft employee—from Little Falls, Minnesota. He had driven ten hours to get to the tournament. I asked him about the victory afterward, and he told me that he'd been imagining a showdown with Weber all week while he practiced back home. "You're always intimidated, bowling him, but you dream about playing him," he said. What had Weber said when they shook hands at the end? Had there been any taunting, any cursing, threats of a rematch? "He said, 'Nice bowling, you threw the ball well.' " Smith's smile turned to a sheepish grin. "And he said, 'Thanks, now I can go home and play golf.' " ♦

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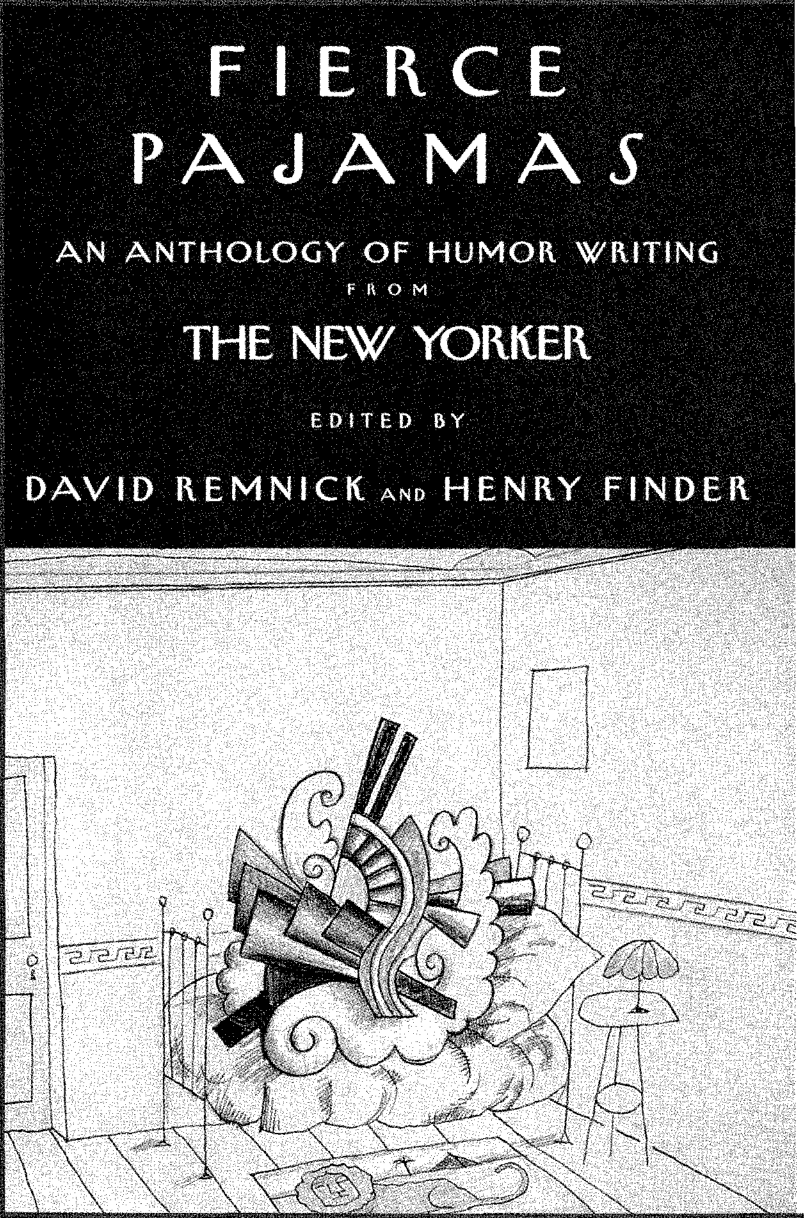

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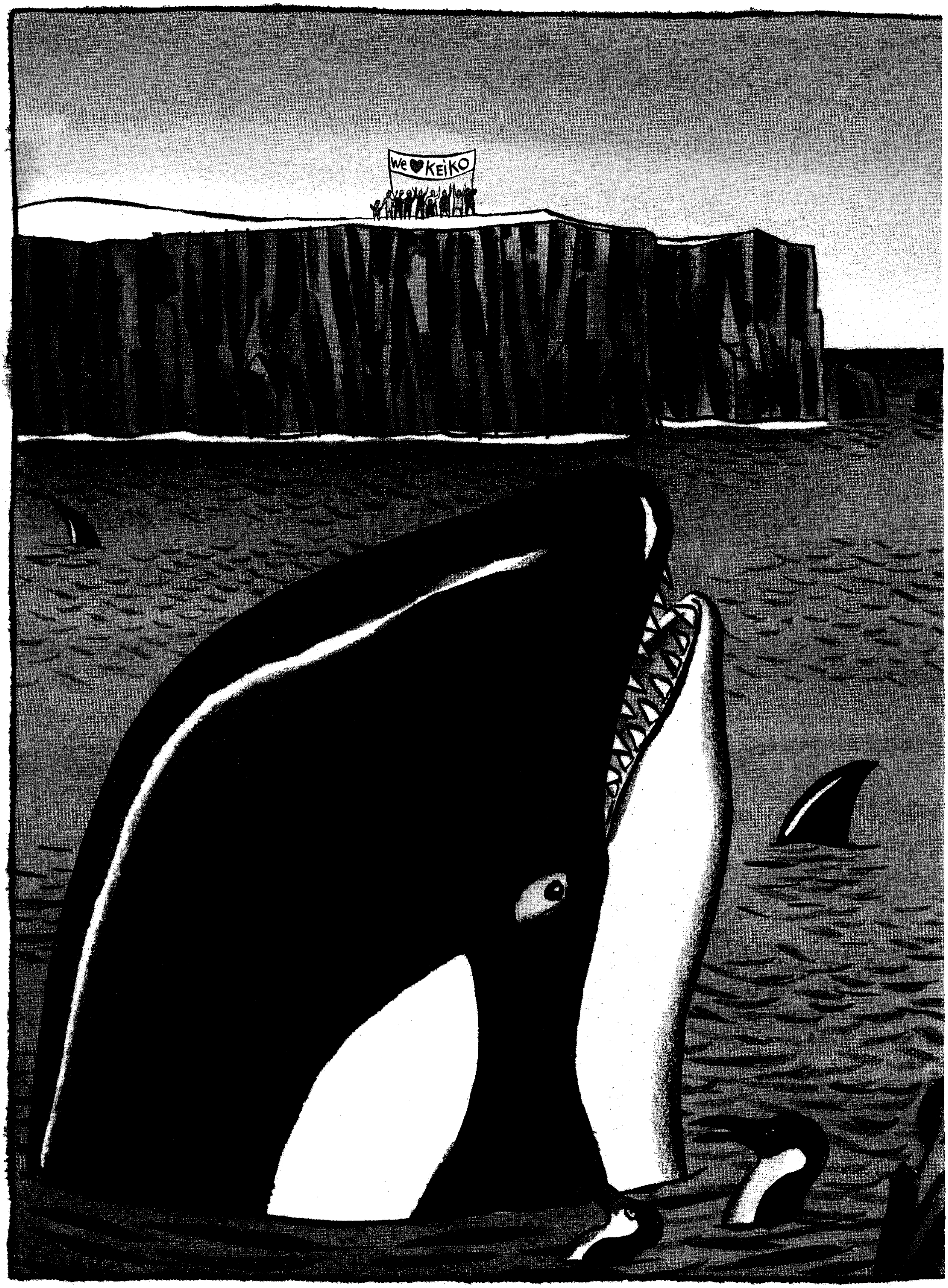


JACQUES DE LOUSTAL

OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

WHERE'S WILLY?

Everybody's favorite whale tries to make it on his own.

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

It was a hell of a time to be in Iceland, although by most accounts it is always a hell of a time to be in Iceland, where the wind never huffs or puffs but simply blows your house down. This was early in August, and it was stormy, as usual, but the summer sun did shine a little, and the geysers burped blue steam and scalding water, and the glaciers groaned as they shoved tons of silt a few centimetres closer to the sea. On the water, the puffins frolicked, the hermit crabs frolicked, and young people bloated with salmon jerky and warm beer barfed politely into motion-sickness buckets on the ferry sailing across Klettsvik Bay. The young people were on their way to an annual songfest and drinkathon on the Westman Islands, a string of volcanic outbreaks off Iceland's southern coast. During the trip, they spoke in Icelandic about Icelandic things, like whether they had remembered bottle openers and bandannas, and then they turned greenish and stopped talking as the boat lurched up and down the huge cold waves. After two hours or so, the waves settled and the boat slowed and glided into Heimaey Harbor, which is ringed by cliffs of old lava as holey as Swiss cheese. Dozens of trawlers and knockabouts bobbed at their moorings, nudging the docks and making that clanging sound that is supposed to make you feel lonely.

A few of the young people, gummy-mouthed and bleary-eyed, roused themselves and gazed out the portholes. We sailed past a row of white buoys strung across the mouth of a small bay.

"Hey! Keiko!" one girl exclaimed, pointing at the buoys.

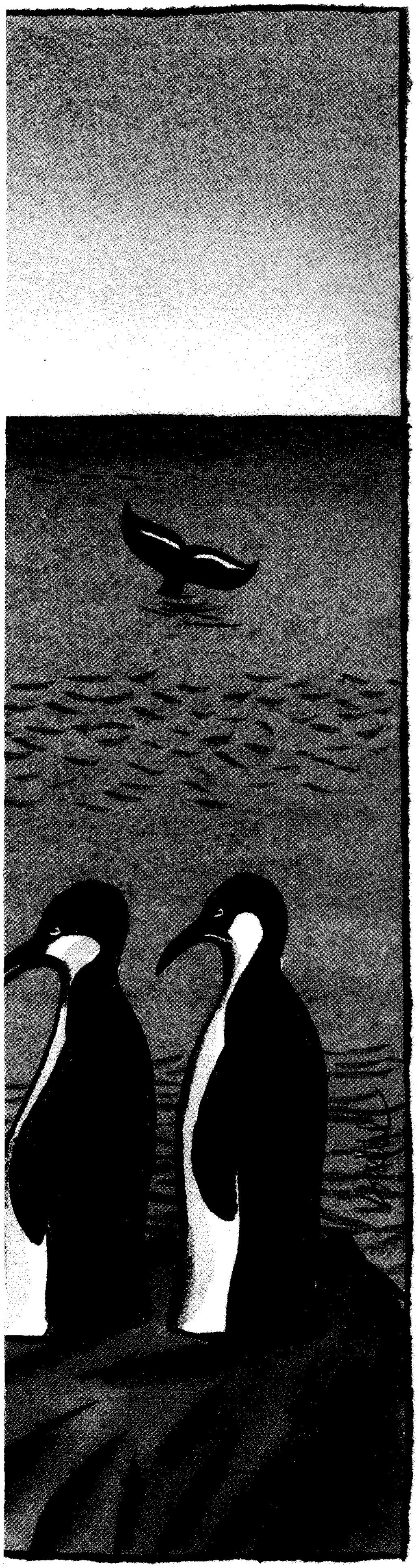
"Huh?" another mumbled, looking where the first one was pointing. "Keiko?"

"Willy! Free Willy!"

"Oh, *Keiko!*" the others said, pushing up to the window, yanking each other's sleeves and gawking at nothing but the empty inlet, the glassy water, the blank, looming cliffs. "Keiko! Oh, yeah! Oh, wow!"

The whale was gone, of course; he left in early July, after taking a watery journey with his human overseers to look at other whales—his kin, if not his kith—who had stopped near the Westman Islands for a midsummer feast. Keiko had seen wild whales before, having originally been one himself, and he had been reintroduced to them two years ago, after twenty years of captivity. He watched the visiting whales from a shy distance at first and a bolder one later, but he always returned to the boat that had led him out to open water. Back at his private pen in the harbor, an international staff of humans would massage his fin, scratch his tongue, and compose press releases detailing his experiences at sea. This July, however, Keiko ventured closer to the whales than ever, and then followed them when they headed off past Lousy Bank, past the Faeroe Islands, onward to—well, honestly, who knows? Whales keep their own counsel. The truth about them is that they come and go, and you can't really know where they've gone—unless you've already fished them out of the water, drilled holes in their dorsal fins, and hung radio tags on them. Only a madman would suggest that drilling a hole in a whale's dorsal fin is easy. This is why no one is sure where the creatures that visit Iceland every summer spend the winter—and where, presumably, they were heading late in July.

But Keiko—which means "lucky one" in Japanese—is the most watched whale in the world. He has a satellite tag and a VHF transmitter and three nonprofit organizations vested in him, along with millions of spectators, waiting to see if this famous, accomplished, celebrated whale, who has lived most of his life as a pet, will



After the success of "Free Willy," a movement was started to reintroduce the movie's captive star, Keiko, into the wild.

take to the wild. Every day that Keiko is on his own, his location is tracked by satellite, relayed over the Internet, and then plotted on a marine chart in the Free Willy/Keiko Foundation offices in the Westman Islands, a row of neatly pencilled "X"s tracing his arcing route through the sea.

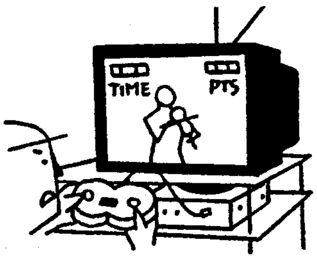
What is known about Keiko is this: he is an *Orcinus orca*, commonly called the orca or killer whale; weighing as much as ten thousand pounds, the orca is the largest member of the dolphin family—big mouth, big teeth, big appetite. Like humans, orcas can kill and eat almost anything they choose. What they usually choose is herring, salmon, or cod, but some orcas prefer to eat sea lions, walruses, and other whales. They have been known to neatly skin a full-grown minke whale, bite off its dorsal fin, and eat only its tongue, a behavior that has been construed as either a tendency toward ostentatious epicurean wastefulness or a cross-species reënactment of an Aztec virgin sacrifice. Orcas seem to have no taste for humans. Only two people have ever been killed by captive killer whales, and both deaths involved the same whale, Sea World's Tillikum, who held his victims underwater to drown them but did not eat them afterward. Orcas are found in every ocean on the planet and have enjoyed relative invulnerability from hunting; they are twenty times less blubbery than sperm whales and have therefore been less valued for oil, and their meat is far less tender and flavorful than that of minke whales. They are, on the other hand, fiercely smart and remarkably educable. They are also handsomely outfitted in black and white with a grayish saddle-patch—more appealing by far than, say, the transcendent horribleness, the blank ghastliness, the strange and awful portentousness of a gigantic white whale. Therein lies the killer whale's real weakness: its suitability for being displayed and taught to perform silly tricks, made all the more marvellous by its reputation as a ruthless assassin.

In 1964, the Vancouver Aquarium commissioned a sculptor to kill an orca to use as a model for an artificial one. An orca was harpooned, but it managed to survive, so the aquarium decided to make the best of the sculptor's ineptitude and display the live whale rather than build the plastic one. The whale was named Moby Doll. She was the first orca in captivity. She died after eighty-seven days, but had been observed enough to demonstrate the species's considerable intelligence. More than a hundred and thirty orcas have been captured for display since Moby Doll's misadventures. Many of them came from Iceland, until all whaling in the country was halted in 1989. Currently, there are about fifty orcas in aquariums and amusement parks around the world, and their scarcity has made them each worth a million dollars or more.

Keiko's beginnings, however, were humble. He was born near Iceland, in 1977 or 1978, and was captured in 1979. For a few years, he lived in a down-in-the-mouth aquarium outside Reykjavik, which raised most of its money by catching and selling killer whales to other aquariums. In 1982, Keiko was sold to Marineland, a park in Niagara Falls, Ontario. There he was bullied by older whales, and in 1985 Marineland sold him to Reino Aventura, an amusement park in Mexico City.

The whale facility at Reino Aventura was too small, too shallow, and too warm for an orca. There were also no other whales to keep Keiko company. He developed an unsightly pimply condition around his armpits and had the muscle tone of a wet noodle. He could hold his breath for only three minutes, and wore down his teeth by gnawing the concrete around his tank. He spent much of his time swimming in nihilistic little circles and had a lethargy that some saw as foretokening an early death. In spite of this, and in spite of his droopy dorsal fin (which is symptomatic of nothing, but made him look sad), he was much adored. He, in turn, was fond of children and cameras.

After Dino De Laurentiis's 1977 disaster epic "Orca," Hollywood had shown little interest in cetacean films. Into this void, a writer named Keith Walker submitted to the producer Richard Donner a script about a mute orphan boy who lives with nuns and befriends a whale at an amusement park. In Walker's original script, the boy is silent until the end of the movie, when he releases the whale into the ocean and cries out, "Free Willy!" Donner, an environmentalist and an animal lover, liked the script's intentions and passed it to his wife, the producer Lauren Shuler Donner, and her partner, Jennie Lew Tugend, for development. Tugend and Shuler Donner thought that the story was too sugary. They rewrote the boy as a juvenile delinquent, the whale as a petulant malcontent, and the amusement-park operator as a penny-pinching crook, but they kept the climactic release.



Once Warner Bros. agreed to underwrite the project, Tugend and Shuler Donner went out to audition the killer whales of the world to play Willy. Twenty-one of the twenty-three orcas in the United States belong to Sea World. The company's executives reviewed the script, shuddered at the message of whale emancipation, and declared all of its orcas unavailable for movie work. Shuler Donner and Tugend looked further. In Mexico, at Reino Aventura, they found not only Keiko but also a dilapidated facility that would be perfect for the film's fictional dilapidated facility, as well as park owners who were disposed to let their whale appear in a pro-wild-whale, anti-captivity movie.

"Free Willy," which was shot on a lean budget of twenty million dollars, had a cast of mostly unknowns, and starred a child actor named Jason James Richter, who was the same age as Keiko: twelve. No one imagined what a success it would become, although Shuler Donner had an inkling when, after an early research screening, a man approached her, held out ten dollars, and said, "Here, use this money to save the whales."

"Free Willy" pulled in huge audiences right from the start—mostly kids, of course, who insisted on seeing the movie over and over and over, thus answering the movie's tag-line question, "How far would you go for a friend?," with a worldwide gross of a hundred and fifty-four million dollars. What's more, the producers had attached a message at the end of the movie directing anyone interested in saving the whales to call 1-800-4-WHALES, a number that be-

"Do we have a place for our portfolio's ashes?"

longed to Earth Island Institute, an environmental group. The resulting torrent of calls blew the minds of everyone involved—the executives at Warner Bros., the producers, the people at Earth Island Institute. And not just the number of calls but the fact that many of the callers were asking something that hadn't been anticipated: Sure, save the wild whales, but, more to the point, what about Willy?

"We had no clue that this would involve Keiko as an individual," David Phillips, of Earth Island Institute, says. "At that point, he was just a prop in the movie. Of course, everyone had fallen in love with him. The cast was in love with him. Everyone who gets near him gets Keiko virus."

Keiko, who had become infected with his own virus—a papillomavirus that had caused the pimply irritation on his skin—was still languishing in Mexico, but now he was in demand. The owners of Reino Aventura didn't want to part with him, but they recognized that he was in poor health, and possibly even dying. They had already tried to find Keiko another home, having previously offered to sell him to Sea World, but Sea World hadn't wanted a warty whale. Now, suddenly, everybody wanted him. Michael Jackson sent representatives to Mexico, hoping to acquire Keiko for his ranch. Conservation groups wanted him for this or that aquarium. Scientists asked to keep him in a tank on Cape Cod for research.

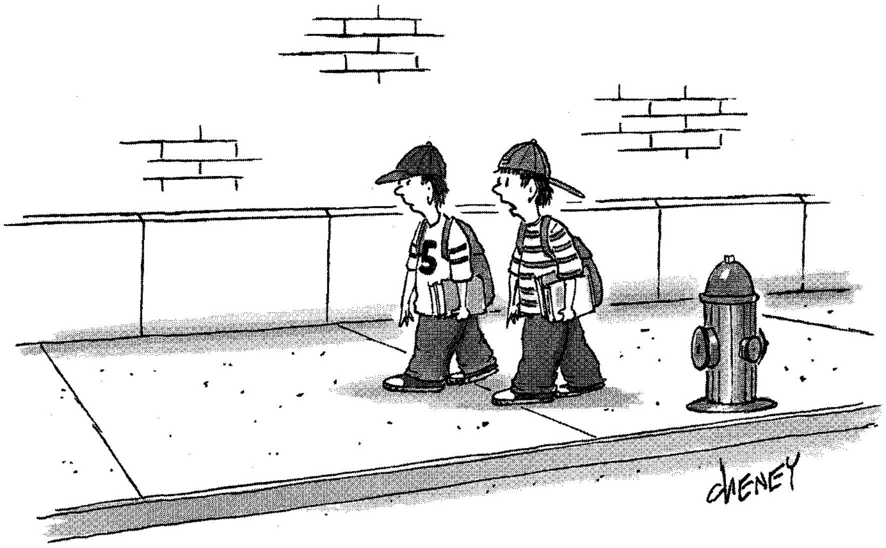
David Phillips, with the support of the movie's producers, had formed the Free Willy/Keiko Foundation, whose mission was to rehabilitate and release Keiko. Reino Aventura's owners finally chose the foundation over other suitors, and agreed to give Keiko away—but the expense of moving and housing him still had to be met. More than a million people had already contributed to the cause, but in amounts that were usually modest, raised at Free Willy bake sales and by kids breaking open their piggy banks. U.P.S. agreed to fly Keiko free of charge, but the container and other incidentals would cost at least two hundred thousand dollars. Shuler Donner brought several bulging bags of letters to the studio executives—letters demanding to know whether Willy had really been set free and, if he hadn't, what they were going to do about it. The Free Willy/Keiko Foundation got a million dollars from both Warner Bros. and the film's other production company, New Regency. The Humane Society of the United States gave another million. Next, the telecommunications tycoon Craig McCaw put in a million, through the Craig and Susan McCaw Foundation.

"Craig's not really an animal person," McCaw's spokesman, Bob Ratliffe, said not long ago. "He's an environmentalist and is interested in the health of the oceans, and—well, long story short, Craig gives the million bucks. And then he gave another one and a half million to build a tank for Keiko in Oregon. His intention was never to be as involved as he became, but he really kind of bonded with Keiko. He went swimming with him. He was actually on the whale's back, and—well, long story short, he got very involved."

Mexican children cried bitterly when Keiko was loaded onto a U.P.S. truck and taken away in January, 1996, and who could blame them? The park used to allow kids to have pool parties with him in his tank, and now he was leaving for good, travelling thousands of miles north to the Oregon Coast Aquarium. In a documentary film about Keiko, his Reino Aventura trainers, two beautiful young women, were nearly hysterical about his departure, saying he was not just a whale or a job but their closest friend. The truck carrying him to the C-130 Hercules cargo plane moved at a solemn pace with a police escort, as if it were the Popemobile, and more than a hundred thousand people lined the streets at dawn to say goodbye. In Newport, Oregon, the depressed, gray seaside town where the aquarium is situated, there were more crowds and more tears—Willy was almost free!—and there was the gorgeous new $7.3 million tank that the Free Willy/Keiko Foundation had built for him, and the staff of six to care for him, cure him, and get him ready for the big, wide world. Throughout Oregon, there was Keikomania, with around-the-clock news reports and Keiko-cams and special sections in the newspaper about the whale, with instructions on how to fold a broadsheet into a whale-shaped cap.

"It was like New Year's Eve when he arrived," Ken Lytwyn, the senior mammalogist at the aquarium, said recently, sounding wistful. "I've worked with dolphins and sea lions and even other killer whales, but Keiko was . . . different. There was really something there."

By every measure, Keiko thrived in Newport. His skin cleared up; he gained



"So many toys—so little unstructured time."

• •

two thousand pounds; he tasted live fish for the first time since infancy; he had toys to play with and a television set on which he could watch cartoons. His caretakers found him more Labrador retriever than orca: cheerful, affectionate, eager to please—the sort of killer whale who, if you were in the tank and he swam over to see what you were doing, would be careful not to accidentally crush you to death. Attendance at the struggling aquarium rose to an all-time high, and all those visitors, with their demands for snacks and souvenirs and motel rooms and gasoline, buoyed every enterprise around.

Wouldn't it have been great if Keiko could have stayed there forever? He was then twenty-one years old, a middle-aged piebald virgin living as good a life as captivity could offer. But the plan had always been to free Willy, even though a killer whale had never been set free before. Moreover, Keiko was hardly an exemplary candidate for release. He had been confined for so long, had become so thoroughly accustomed to human contact, and was so much more a diplomat than an executioner that it was hard to imagine him chewing holes in walruses and beating schools of salmon to a pulp with his terrible, awesome tail.

When would Keiko be ready to take the next step toward freedom? Criteria had been set up, benchmarks had been established—Was he eating live fish? Could he swim great distances? Could he hold his breath underwater for a long time?—but, still, right-minded people could disagree. In fact, right-minded people could even litigate, as the Oregon Coast Aquarium did, in 1997, to prevent the Free Willy/Keiko Foundation from moving the whale to Iceland, where he would be decanted into the actual ocean, into an open-water pen in Heimaey Harbor. The aquarium's position was that Keiko was not ready to leave; the foundation's position was that (a) Keiko was indeed ready to leave, and (b) he belonged to the foundation, not the aquarium. Relations grew ugly, then hideous. In early October, 1997, the board members of the aquarium requested an independent evaluation of Keiko's health. A few days later, the Oregon Veterinary Medical Examining Board announced that it would investigate Keiko's care and the legality of his custody arrangements. There was talk in the Free Willy camp of moving Keiko to a pen in Oregon's Depoe Bay. Finally, a blue-ribbon panel of experts was formed to analyze Keiko's well-being and determine his fitness for release. To the dismay of the Oregon Coast Aquarium, the run of million-visitor years would soon be over: the panel announced that Keiko was ready and able to go.

Even then, there were skeptics who believed that the effort to free Keiko was doomed. Some of those skeptics also happened to be employed by Sea World, which had been picketed to free their own orcas in the wake of "Free Willy": they warned that the poor whale would get frostbite if he was exiled to dark, cold, miserable Iceland—this in spite of the fact that Keiko was born in Iceland and that killer whales teemed in the waters offshore. But even among whale people—free-whale people, that is—there was doubt. Keiko, they argued, was already ruined. It was too late to teach him what a wild whale needs to know, and he repeatedly demonstrated an alarming preference for frozen fish over fresh, suggesting that his tastes had become completely corrupted by two decades in a fishbowl. What's more, there was a conspiracy theory circulating in the most radical anti-captivity ranks that Sea World might actually be behind the free-Keiko efforts, knowing that they would fail, thus inoculating amusement parks around the world from an upwelling of liberationist sentiment.

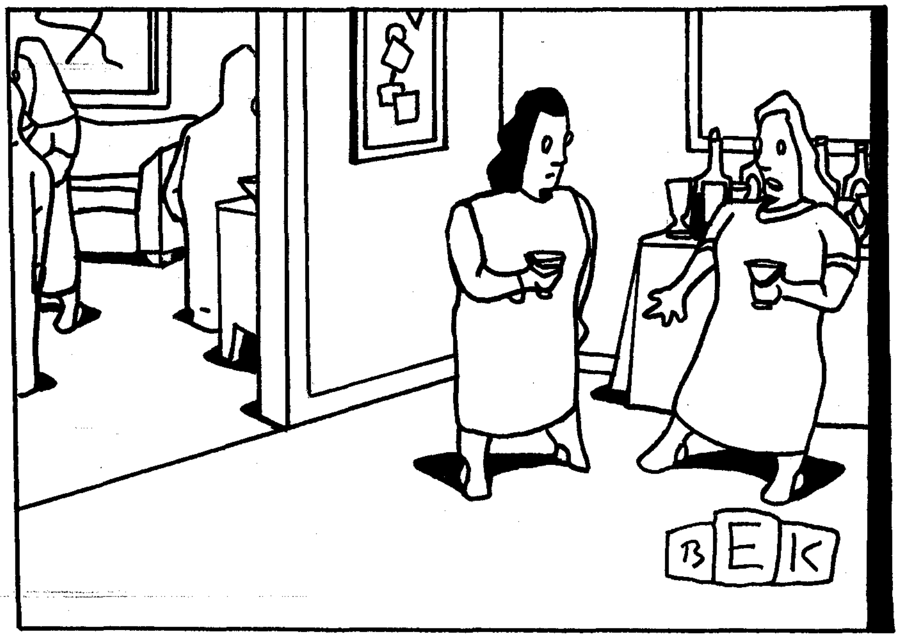
Skepticism was not the only impediment to moving Keiko to his ancestral home. Consider this: Icelandic fishermen view whales as annoying and gluttonous—blubbery fish-grinders that consume commercial product by the ton. The government has asked the International Whaling Commission to allow regulated whaling again, and Iceland recently accepted the first shipment of Norwegian whale meat in fourteen years. Now imagine that you are David Phillips, of Earth Island Institute, and you represent a telecommunications billionaire, the Humane Society, and Ocean Futures, an environmental group founded by Jean-Michel Cousteau, and you are approaching various Icelandic ministries for permits to construct a million-dollar pen in the harbor; organize a fleet of boats, helicopters, and airplanes; and muster a crew of scientists, veterinarians, and animal trainers for the nurture and eventual discharge of one Keiko, a.k.a. Willy, a whale. Furthermore, the affront of having a whale so coddled in Icelandic waters would not even be offset by the comfort of cold cash, since Keiko would not be on display. There would be no Icelandair travel packages to visit Keiko—he would be living in a pen in the harbor, accessible only by boat, and he would be slowly weaned from human contact to ready him for life among his brethren. "The opposition from the Ministry of Fisheries was fierce," Phillips said. “This was antithetical to everything they do. There is very little by way of whale-conservation awareness in Iceland, and a lot of hostility toward anything coming from the U.S. So we started looking at other locations, in Ireland and in England, too. But Iceland was Keiko’s home waters and really the best place for him, and, after a long series of complexities, we finally got it approved.”

So now there was another flight to pay for (three hundred and seventy thousand dollars), another pen to build (a million dollars), a staff to recruit and equip and pay. The annual costs of the project in Iceland were estimated at three million dollars; if Keiko never learned to live on his own, the foundation could conceivably be looking after him for thirty more years, at a cost of ninety million dollars. “Along the way, this had become a different kind of project,” Bob Ratliffe, of the Craig and Susan McCaw Foundation, explained. “It was involving planes and helicopters and big boats and major expenses.” But, Ratliffe said, a commitment had been made to the creature, and there was a desire to do something people said couldn’t be done. The flight on an Air Force C-17 was booked, the gallons of diaper-rash ointment to moisturize Keiko during the long flight procured, Familian Industrial Plastics contracted to build the new pen, the staff of fifteen lined up. By September of 1998, it was all ready. The goodbyes were again tearful. Keikomania had rolled on, unabated, since the day the whale arrived in Newport, and two more Willy movies had come out, further inciting whale devotion—“Free Willy 2: The Adventure Home,” and “Free Willy 3: The Rescue”—although these used computer-enhanced footage of wild whales and animatronic models rather than a real Willy.

“I went to his tank and told him goodbye and good luck,” Ken Lytwyn, the Oregon Coast Aquarium mammalogist, recalls. “I would love to see the release work, but, because of who Keiko is, the kind of individual he is, I don’t think it will. I was really sad when they said he was going, but it wasn’t my call.”

Ah, the Westman Islands! So raw, so rugged, ripped so recently from the earth’s dermis—in fact, the youngest landmass on the planet may be the little rock pile called Surtsey, the southernmost Westman in the chain, tossed up above sea level only thirteen years before Keiko’s mother conceived him. And as recently as 1973 a volcano erupted right in the middle of Heimaey, increasing the island’s landmass by twenty per cent. To make a living, people in the Westmans fish and they fish and they fish, and a few of them service the small but steady tourist economy. Slogans range from the somewhat inexplicable “Westman Islands, Capri of the North” to the more explicable “Ten Million Puffins Can’t Be Wrong.” Everywhere you look, you see dozens of these stout, clownish black-and-white birds: nesting in lava outcroppings, teetering on cliffs, plopping like stones into the sea. Every August, the baby puffins sail out of their nests to make their first trip on the ocean and instead crash-land in town, seduced by the lights of human civilization. This magical visitation and potential avian catastrophe is known as *pysjunaetur*—the Night of the Pufflings—and children and visitors await it every summer, armed with cardboard boxes for the rescue effort, and, in the morning, they release the babies at the water’s edge. When full grown, puffins are enjoyed in the Westmans roasted, smoked, or sliced thin, like carpaccio.

The whale was not unwelcome here when he arrived, in September of 1998, even though you couldn’t see him unless you drove up to the ledge across the harbor and looked through a telescope that the foundation had installed; and even though not many local people got jobs; and even though the Keiko merchandise—the shot glasses and aprons and tea cozies decorated with his distinctive black-and-white face—wasn’t flying off the shelves in the souvenir shops. He was met with what was becoming the standard greeting in Keiko’s life—several hundred accredited representatives of the media and scores of ebullient schoolchildren, many of whom had first seen “Free Willy” when an Icelandic hot-dog company gave the video away for free with a six-pack of franks. Everyone, certainly, liked Keiko, admired him for his gentle giantness, for being the good egg who tolerated being crated and shipped hither and thither, for suffering with a sort of martyred calm the strange, fickle circumstances of his life. If anyone thought that the money being spent on his rehabilitation was an insane extravagance, they didn’t blame it on the whale: it wasn’t his fault that he was captured to begin with and stuck in a lousy tub in Mexico. It wasn’t his fault that he became a ten-thousand-pound symbol of promises kept (or not) and dreams achieved (or not) and integrity maintained (or not) and nature respected (or not). It also wasn’t his fault that he didn’t know how to blow a bubble-net and trap herring, and it wasn’t his fault that he’d been torn from the bosom of his family at such a young age that now he was a



“I do have a special someone, but he sucks.”

little afraid of wild whales, and that they viewed him as a bit of a freak.

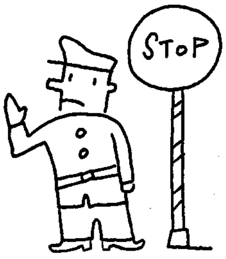
Moving the Keiko project to Iceland wasn't easy. The storms were endless—wild, white, end-of-the-world storms, with screaming winds and waves so high and stiff that they looked set with pomade. A walloping squall hit Heimaey just two weeks after Keiko arrived. The pen net, held in place with what the staff called "the big-ass chain"—each link weighed five hundred pounds—broke apart and had to be rebuilt and reanchored. Keiko's living quarters were splendid, but everything had to be done by boat, since the land that formed the bay around him was a sheer ridge of petrified lava. A crust of grass grew on the lava, and every summer local farmers ferried their sheep out to spend the season grazing on the ridge. The staff agreed to restrain Keiko when the sheep were floated back and forth, since no one could guarantee that a killer whale wouldn't have a taste for mutton. And throughout the next three years the caretaking staff turned over again and again, because it was lonely and cold in Iceland, even if you were crazy in love with your whale.

Then the stock market deflated. This would not ordinarily be a matter of much concern to a whale, but Craig McCaw now wanted to pay more attention to his other undertakings—some land-based conservation efforts, some world-peace initiatives with Nelson Mandela—and it just so happened that his company, Nextel, had seen its stock price fall from a high of more than eighty dollars a share to somewhere around ten. He wasn't crying poorhouse, but the word went out at the end of 2001 that the three-million-dollar annual underwriting from the Craig and Susan McCaw Foundation was finished.

It was such an irony, in a way—just as everything in Keiko's life has been an irony—that the funding dried up just as the project was starting to accomplish what it had set out to do. In the summer of 2000, Keiko began taking supervised "walks" out of his pen into the ocean. At first, when he saw wild whales he did a spy-hop to look at them and then swam back to the staff boat and followed it home. The next year, he dallied a little, and more than once he stayed with the wild whales when the staff boat sailed away. Meanwhile, the budget for the project was cut from more than three million dollars a year to six hundred thousand dollars, and the helicopter and pilot that McCaw had provided were furloughed, and the Free Willy/Keiko Foundation offices in Heimaey were consolidated into one drab waterfront space, a former grocery store (with, conveniently enough, a huge freezer for Keiko's herring).

Despite Keiko's progress, though, there was no irrefutable evidence that he would ever leave his bay pen permanently. During the winter, when the wild whales were gone, he was back in his pen full time, and he was the same tractable fellow as always, ready in a minute to put his big wet rubbery head in your lap. If he was getting an idea of what wildness was, he was still a bit of a baby, and certainly daintier than you might think a killer whale should be. Once, when the trainers instructed him to bring something up from the bottom of the bay, he presented them with a puffin feather when they were expecting something more like a boulder, and then he accidentally dropped it, dived back down, and brought up the same tiny feather. Another time, he came up with a little hermit crab that was blithely scurrying up and down the long row of his teeth, oblivious of the fact that it was inside the mouth of a killer whale. When seagulls stole his food, he got angry, but he usually just grabbed them, shook them a bit, and spit them out.

Really, though, just how big a baby was he? There were plenty of people who wondered whether Keiko was being held back. "I worry about the trainers," David Phillips said recently. "Just who is more dependent on whom?" It wasn't simply a question of Keiko's providing jobs for people but the emotional attachment. One of his trainers carried pictures of Keiko rather than of her children in her wallet. And if Keiko didn't leave—that is, if he didn't join a whale pod, learn how to hunt, eschew the easy life of a kept man, a Hollywood retiree—he would have to be funded with new money from somewhere. Whoever contributed to the Keiko project now would have to do it knowing that he or she would probably be underwriting not a magnificent mammal's colossal leap to freedom but an ongoing day-care program for an aging whale.



Then, on July 7th, he was gone like a shot. The trainers had led him out to the waters near Surtsey, where several pods of killer whales were rounding up a ration of herring, and Keiko headed over to them and didn't turn back. Days went by, and he was still loitering with them. The project staff checked on him, noted that he was getting on nicely, and then slipped away without his noticing. More days went by. The summer was in full bloom. The sun hung in the sky until close to midnight; the ice creaked and melted; the sheep, now so heavy with wool that they looked like four-legged snowballs, clipped the grass down to the rock on the cliffs surrounding the empty bay pen. In late July, a huge storm muscled in on Heimaey, and for days it was too rough to send anyone out on the water. The satellite was still transmitting coördinates from Keiko's radio tag, but there was no way to tell whether he was with other whales and eating, or floundering around, lost.

By the time I got to Heimaey, Keiko had been on his own for almost a month. I went down to the office the morning I arrived, during the three-hour window of the satellite feed. It is a large room across from the harbor, outfitted with a motley array of cast-off desks, boating magazines, foul-weather gear, and photographs of a loaf of bread that one of the staff members had baked in the still-warm crater of Heimaey's volcano. A handful of people wandered in and out: Fernando Ugarte, a Mexican scientist with a master's degree in the killer whales of Norway; John Valentine, an American whale-training consultant, in town from his home in Thailand; Colin Baird, a Canadian now running the Heimaey office; Michael Parks, a marine-operations coördinator, who is from Oklahoma but lives in Alaska; a Danish whale scientist; a sailor from Ireland; and three Icelandic staff members, one of whom was an awesomely musclebound former Mr. Iceland. Charles Vinick, the executive vice-president of Ocean Futures, had flown in the day before from the group's Paris office, to organize the effort to figure out where Keiko had gone. Naomi Rose, a marine-mammal scientist with the Humane Society, had also just arrived on what had been planned as a trip to check Keiko's physical fitness.

"It looks like he's spent all this time with wild whales," Vinick said. "To me that's, like, wow."

Michael Parks was plotting the satellite information on a marine chart. "He's south today," he said. "Jesus Christ, he's here." He was pointing to a spot southeast of Surtsey, several inches off the chart.

"He's making the decisions now. He's in charge," Vinick said. "He could be gone for good." People drifted over to examine the chart. It looked as though Keiko was travelling sixty or seventy miles a day and was now too far away to reach by the project's fast but open-deck workboat. It was decided that three people would take a sailboat in Keiko's general direction. This would put them out of regular radio range, making it impossible to receive the updated satellite coördinates. But one of the staff people knew a company in Reykjavik that rented satellite telephones that would work at such distances, and arranged to have one flown from Reykjavik to Heimaey—or conveyed by ferry, if fog, which rolled in regularly, kept the island airport closed. Then another group would carry the phone out to the sailboat on the little workboat. Vinick also wanted to hire a private plane to fly overhead, but none would be available for a couple of days. Once they sighted Keiko—if they sighted Keiko—they would either leave him alone, if he seemed to be eating and keeping company with other whales, or lure him back to the pen, if he seemed distressed or lonely or hungry. By the time all the arrangements were made, everyone seemed a little exhausted, as if they had laid out plans for an armed invasion.

ACCESS DENIED

We took a boat out in the harbor to check on the pen. On the deck of the equipment shed was a dead puffin, probably blown sideways by the storm. Inside the shed, someone had posted a list of possible new behaviors to teach Keiko which included "Pec slap and swim," "Bubble-blow underwater," and "Swallow Jim in one piece." A crew of divers was scheduled to start cleaning the seaweed off the net in preparation for winter, although now it seemed like a bootless task, given that Keiko might never come back.

But it was a good day, all things considered. The Humane Society had just revealed that it would take over managing and funding the project, and Craig McCaw's ex-wife, Wendy, announced a grant of four hundred thousand dollars for Keiko. In the afternoon, the fog thinned, flights made their way to Heimaey, and the rented satellite phone arrived. As we loaded gear onto the workboat, a gray-faced local woman, bundled in a man's overcoat and red galoshes, hollered from the dock, "How's my Keiko? Is our star still out there?"

Call me only slightly disappointed. Who wouldn't want to have seen the great black-and-white whale? Who wouldn't want to scratch his tongue, look into that plum-size eye, take a turn around the bay pen on his back? All I saw of whales in Iceland were two humpbacks who dived a few feet from the workboat, flourishing their tails like ladies' fans. Keiko was far away by then, headed for Norway, where he panhandled from picnicking families and romped in Skaalvik Fjord. What a choice! In the entire world, the only country that allows commercial whaling is Norway, and a member of Bergen's Institute of Marine Research suggested that it was time to stop the madness and put Keiko to death. But the children who swam on his back and fed him fish reportedly found him delightful, as has everyone who has ever known Keiko. He played with them for a night and a day, the luckiest whale in the world, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago. ♦

THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

THE GREED CYCLE

How the financial system encouraged corporations to go crazy.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

There are many ways to take the measure of what has happened to corporate America in recent years. As good a way as any is to flip through some back copies of the *Financial Times*, which recently published a remarkable series of articles on what it termed the "barons of bankruptcy—a privileged group of top business people who made extraordinary personal fortunes even as their companies were heading for disaster." The *F.T.* examined the twenty-five biggest business collapses since the start of last year. From the beginning of 1999 to the end of 2001, senior executives and directors of these doomed companies walked away with some $3.3 billion in salary, bonuses, and the proceeds from sales of stock and stock options. Some of the names on the list were familiar to anybody who reads the papers: Global Crossing's Gary Winnick ($512.4 million); Enron's Kenneth Lay ($246.7 million); and WorldCom's Scott Sullivan ($49.4 million). However, there were also many names that haven't received much public attention, such as Clark McLeod and Richard Lumpkin, the former chairman and the former vice-chairman, respectively, of McLeodUSA, a telecommunications company based in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. These two corporate philanthropists cashed in stock worth ninety-nine million dollars and a hundred and sixteen million dollars, respectively, before the rest of the stockholders were wiped out.

Even veteran observers have been taken aback by recent events. "It became a competitive game to see how much money you could get," Paul Volcker, the former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, told me when I visited him at his office in Rockefeller Center a couple of weeks ago. Earlier this year, Volcker tried and failed to rescue Arthur Andersen, Enron's accounting firm, which ended up going out of business. "Corporate greed exploded beyond anything that could have been imagined in 1990," Volcker went on. "Traditional norms didn't exist. You had this whole culture where the only sign of worth was how much money you made."

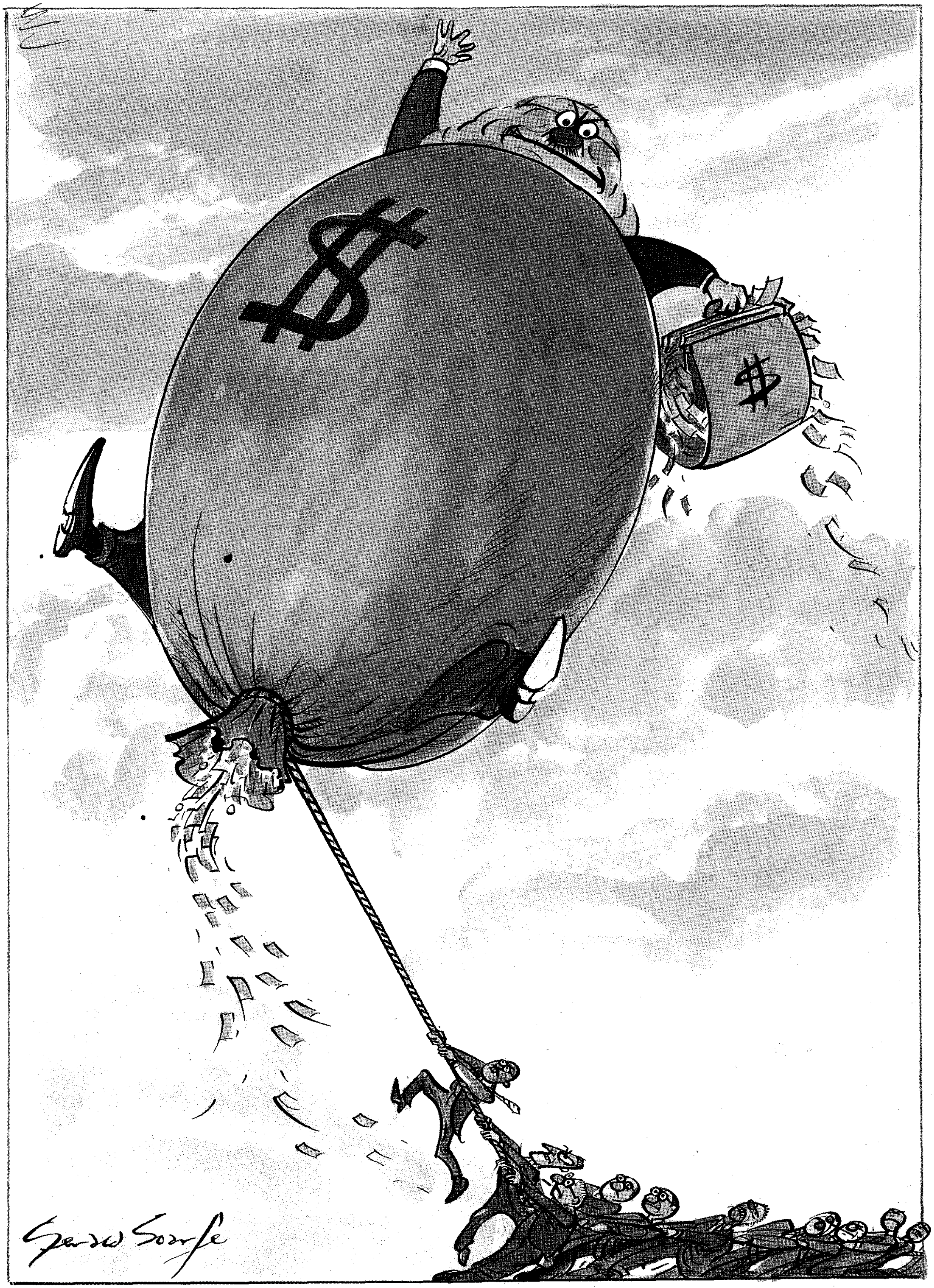
Economists from Adam Smith to Milton Friedman have seen greed as an inevitable and, in some ways, desirable feature of capitalism. In a well-regulated and well-balanced economy, greed helps to keep the system expanding. But it is also kept in check, lest it undermine public faith in the entire enterprise. The extraordinary thing about the last few years is not the mere presence of greed but the way it was systematically encouraged and then allowed to career out of control. Kenneth Lay, in quietly selling stock and exercising stock options worth more than two hundred million dollars shortly before Enron collapsed, wasn't just being a selfish, unscrupulous individual: he was defying the social contract that underpins a system, which, despite its faults, has lasted almost two hundred years.

In 1814, Francis Cabot Lowell, a Boston merchant, founded the first public company, when he built a textile factory on the banks of the Charles River in Waltham, Massachusetts, and called it the Boston Manufacturing Company. Lowell had smuggled a plan of a power loom out of England, and he intended to compete with the Lancashire mills. But he couldn't afford to pay for the construction and installation of expensive machinery by himself, so he sold stock in his company to ten associates. Within seven years, these stockholders had received a cumulative return of more than a hundred per cent, and Lowell had established a new business model. Under its auspices, mankind has invented cures for deadly diseases, extracted minerals from ocean floors, extended commerce to all corners of the earth, and generated unprecedented rates of economic expansion.

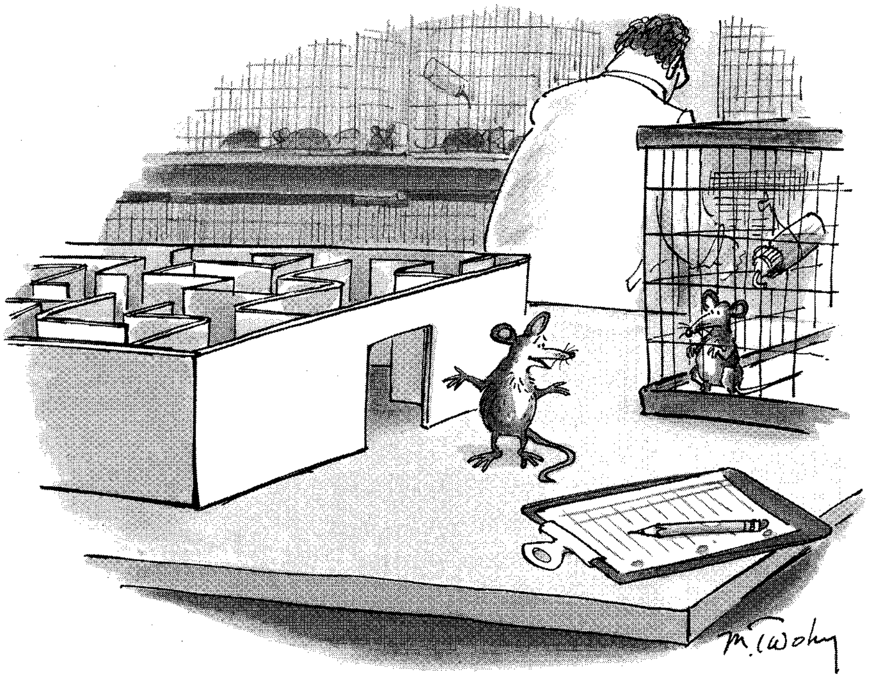
Initially, most economists were skeptical of Lowell's innovation. At the heart of any public company there is an implicit bargain: the managers promise to run the company in the owners' interest, and the stockholders agree to hand over day-to-day control of the business to the managers. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to make sure that the managers don't slack off, or divert some of the stockholders' money into their own pockets. Adam Smith was among the first to identify this problem. "The directors of such companies . . . being the managers rather of other people's money than of their own, it cannot well be expected that they should watch over it with the same anxious vigilance with which the partners in a private [company] frequently watch over their own," Smith wrote in "The Wealth of Nations." And he went on, "Negligence and profusion, therefore, must always prevail, more or less, in the management of the affairs of such a company."

Smith thought that private companies would remain the normal way of doing business, but technological change and financial necessity proved him wrong. With the development of the railroads, for example, companies like the New York Central and the Union Pacific needed to raise tens of millions of dollars from outside investors to lay track and buy rolling stock. And because the administrative complexity of the railroads was too much for a single entrepreneur to handle, a new class of full-time executives, men like Collis P. Huntington and Edward C. Harriman, emerged to run them. Though the emerging industry attracted dubious financiers like Jay Gould, most of the professional managers were content to collect generous salaries and pensions rather than ha-

GERALD SCARFE



If the past thirty years have demonstrated anything about business, it is that the avarice of corporate leaders is practically unlimited.



"I don't usually volunteer for experiments, but I'm kind of a puzzle freak."

bitually attempt to rob the stockholders and bondholders. "It is a strong proof of the marvelous growth in recent times of a spirit of honesty and uprightness in commercial matters, that the leading officers of great public companies yield as little as they do to the vast temptations to fraud which lie in their way," the British economist Alfred Marshall said in 1890.

Alas, by the late nineteen-twenties it was clear that corporate perfidy was prospering in an impressive variety of forms, most of them involving insiders exploiting their position to fleece outsiders. After the stock-market crash of 1929, congressional investigators uncovered widespread insider trading, stock-price manipulation, and diversion of corporate funds to personal use. Then, as now, the revelations of corporate wrongdoing prompted the federal government to respond. The Securities Act of 1933 imposed extensive disclosure requirements on any company wanting to issue stock, and outlawed insider dealing and other attempts to manipulate the market. In 1934, the Securities and Exchange Commission was set up to enforce the new regulations.

Public confidence in business eventually recovered, but the potential conflict of interest at the heart of public companies was never fully resolved. During the nineteen-sixties and early seventies, corporate managers were often cavalier about the interests of stockholders. Back then, the chief executive's compensation was usually linked to the size of the firm he ran—the bigger the company, the bigger the paycheck. This encouraged business leaders to build sprawling empires rather than focus on their firms' profitability and stock price. Many of them spent heavily on perquisites of office, such as lavish headquarters and corporate retreats, and they kept on spending even when their companies ran into trouble.

In theory, the stockholders could have joined together to force out managers, but organizing such a collective effort was costly and time consuming, and it rarely happened. Nor was managerial waste constrained by competition from rival firms that didn't splurge on pink marble for the office bathrooms. Companies like General Motors saw their businesses decimated by foreign competition, but C.E.O.s, such as G.M.'s Roger Smith, rarely suffered. From a stockholder's perspective, something more potent was required to get those who ran the companies to serve the interests of those who owned the companies. When the solution materialized, it would turn out to be more potent than anybody had imagined.

Thirty years ago, two obscure young financial economists provided the spark for reform. Michael Jensen and William Meckling had graduate degrees from the University of Chicago, where Milton Friedman and his disciples taught that there was little wrong with the American economy that more competition wouldn't resolve. During the early seventies, Jensen and Meckling, who were then both at the University of Rochester, tried to apply this idea to the internal workings of the public company. They began with the supposition that senior managers, faced with competition from other firms, would do the best they could for their stockholders, by cutting costs and trying to make as big a profit as possible. "But the more we thought about it the more we realized that what we had been taught in Chicago and believed most of our lives wasn't true," Jensen recalled recently. "It wasn't automatically true that corporations would maximize value."

Jensen and Meckling couched their arguments in the mathematical jargon favored by assistant professors seeking tenure, but the model they came up with had an enormous practical impact. It planted the idea that the most important people in any company are not the employees or the managers but the owners—the stockholders and bondholders. This model provided an intellectual rationale, of sorts, for the controversial explosion in C.E.O. pay that began in the nineteen-eighties; and it justified the widespread adoption of executive stock options.

Jensen and Meckling analyzed the relationship between stockholders and managers as a "principal-agent problem"—a dilemma that arises whenever one party (the principal) employs another (the agent) to do a job for him. It might be a family hiring a contractor to renovate its house, a company hiring a brokerage firm to manage its retirement fund, or even an electorate choosing a government. In all these cases, the same issue arises: How can the principal insure that the agent acts in his or her interest? As anybody who has dealt with a contractor knows, there is no simple solution. One option is to design a contract that rewards the contractor for doing the job well. Municipal-construction projects, for example, have a chronic tendency to overrun, snarling traffic and infuriating the public. So when the City of New York, say, puts out tenders for roadwork, its contracts often include financial incentives for finishing the work early and penalties for being late.

Jensen and Meckling were the first economists to apply this idea to corporations. They argued that there was no perfect way to align the interests of the owners and the managers. In any firm that relied on outsiders for financing, the senior executives would make some damaging decisions. If the firm issued stock, they would waste some of the proceeds on perks like corporate jets. If the firm issued debt, the managers, knowing that the bondholders would be the main losers if anything went wrong, would make too many risky investments. The "agency costs" that the business incurred as a result of these actions were unavoidable. It didn't matter whether the firm was a cosseted monopoly or a company facing extensive competition: managers would destroy value.

Jensen and Meckling had a hard time getting their ideas accepted. "I gave a seminar at the University of Chicago, and it was just a disaster," Jensen recalled. "People were shouting at me, 'How can you say competition doesn't solve all problems?' " Eventually, though, most economists accepted Jensen and Meckling's logic, and they began to ask more questions: How should the performances of senior executives be measured? Was it better to give them money, in the form of salaries or bonuses, or company stock? If some managerial inefficiency was inevitable, how could it be minimized? Principal-agent theory provided a clear answer to these questions: treat chief executives just like plumbers, contractors, or any other truculent agent, and reward them for acting in the best interest of the principal—i.e., the stockholders.

At the time, many chief executives saw their main task as overseeing the welfare of their employees and customers. As long as the firm made a decent profit every year and raised the dividend it paid its stockholders, this was considered good enough. But, once C.E.O.s were viewed as merely the agents of the firm's owners, they were urged to live by a new, simpler credo: shareholder value. Henceforth, economists and management gurus agreed, their overriding aim should be to maximize the value of the firm, as it was determined in the stock market.

The shareholder-value movement soon attracted rich and aggressive investors who used the economists' arguments to justify attacks on corporate America. During the hostile-takeover wave of the nineteen-eighties, controversial figures like T. Boone Pickens and Carl Icahn bought stakes in public companies they considered undervalued and, claiming to represent the ordinary stockholder, often tried to seize control. Since the corporate raiders financed their attacks with borrowed money, their takeovers became known as "leveraged buyouts," or LBOs. In a typical LBO, the acquirer would buy out the public stockholders and run the company as a private concern, slashing costs and slimming it down. The ultimate aim was to refloat the company on the stock market at a higher valuation. Individual raiders weren't the only force behind LBOs. Wall Street firms like Kohlberg Kravis Roberts and Hicks, Muse also got in on the game. Nearly half of all major public corporations received a takeover offer in the eighties. Many companies were forced to lay off workers and sell off underperforming divisions in order to boost their stock price and fend off potential bidders. Raiders were popularly denounced as speculators and predators, which, of course, most of them were. Thomas Eagleton, a Democratic senator from Missouri, called Carl Icahn "a fourteen-karat pirate motivated by one instinct—greed."

Still, many economists defended LBOs as an effective way to overcome the agency problems that Jensen and Meckling had identified. The stockholders who sold out often made considerable profits, and the managers of bought-out companies were usually given large chunks of equity. Senior executives would be forced to run the firms more efficiently, it was argued, because of all the debt that had been taken on, and, if they boosted the value of the firm, they should make a lot of money themselves. Michael Jensen became one of the strongest supporters of LBOs. In 1989, he published an article in the *Harvard Business Review* in which he claimed that the traditional public company had "outlived its usefulness in many sectors of the economy."

This declaration proved premature. When the economy went into a recession during the early nineteen-nineties,

"I've transferred all my vacation time into absurdly long coffee breaks."

many of the firms that had gone private, such as Macy's and Revco, couldn't keep up their interest payments, and the resulting wave of bankruptcies discredited the LBO as a business model. Far from creating value, many LBOs had ended up wiping out the investors and bondholders who financed them. The only people who consistently made money were the stockholders and senior managers who sold out early on. The enduring economic lesson of the LBO era was that unleashing greed wasn't enough to raise efficiency. But the message that corporate America took from its ordeal was quite different: senior executives who converted to the new religion of shareholder value tended to get very rich, while those who argued that corporations ought to consider their employees and customers as well as their stockholders often ended up without a job.

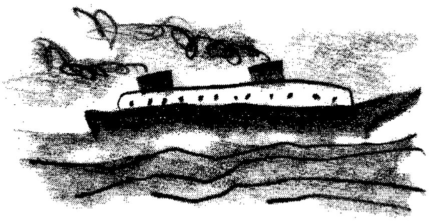
At the same time, corporations came to realize that leveraged buyouts weren't the only way to align the interests of managers and shareholders. There was a much simpler tool available, which didn't involve going to all the trouble of a multibillion-dollar takeover: the executive stock option. Once endowed with a generous grant of these magical instruments, a senior executive would no longer think of himself as a mere hired hand but as a proprietor who had the long-term health of the firm at heart. That was the theory, anyway.

An executive stock option is a legal contract that grants its owner the right to buy a stock in his or her company at a certain price (the "strike price") on a certain date in the future. Take a company with a stock price of fifty dollars that grants its chief executive the right to buy a million shares three years hence at the current market price. Assume the stock price rises by ten per cent each year, so that after three years it is trading at about sixty-six dollars and fifty cents. At that point, the chief executive can "exercise" his option and make the company sell him a million shares at fifty dollars. Then he can sell the shares in the open market, and clear a profit of sixteen and a half million dollars.

The first stock-option incentive plan was introduced in 1950, the year in which Congress decided that recipients of stock options could defer paying tax until they exercised them and sold the shares. Soon thereafter, the Accounting Principles Board, the accounting-industry body that laid down guidelines for how companies calculate their earnings, decided that stock options, unlike salaries and bonuses, would not be counted as a corporate expense. This decision had momentous consequences, since it meant that, from a firm's perspective, executive stock options were free. Companies could issue as many options as they wished, and they wouldn't have to deduct a cent from the earnings they reported to shareholders.

Eventually, this accounting ruling transformed the way corporations paid their senior managers, but at the time it provoked little comment. Back then, executive stock options were still rare. Most senior executives thought that they were too risky and insisted on being paid in cash. This remained true throughout the nineteen-sixties and seventies, except in the technology sector, where firms developing untested products often didn't have enough money to pay high salaries. For young firms, stock options provided a convenient way to maintain the loyalty of valuable employees while conserving cash. If things went well for the company, options could be extremely lucrative: in 1982, after the Dow finally broke out of its decline, Frederick W. Smith, the chief executive of Federal Express, cashed in options worth more than fifty million dollars.

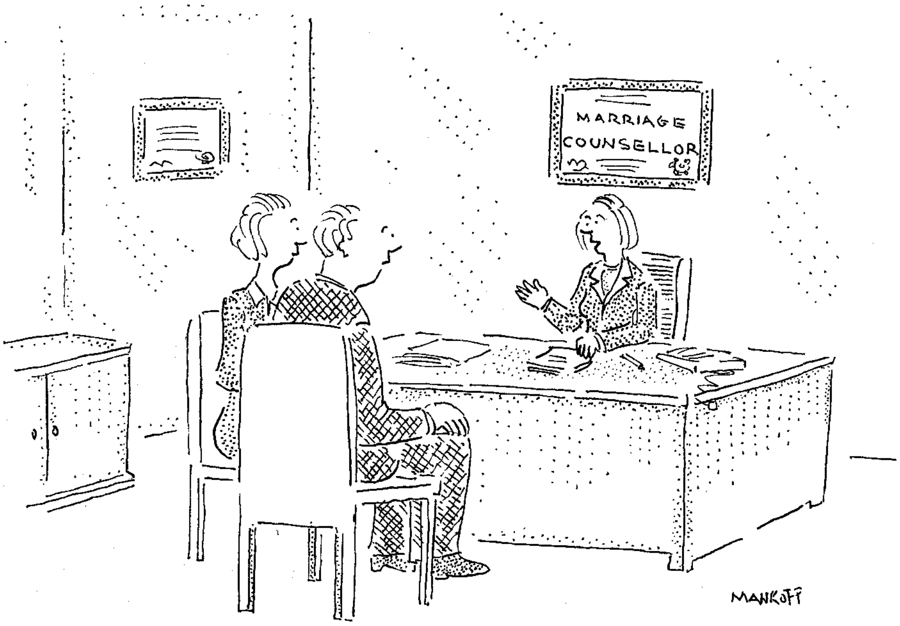
In 1980, fewer than a third of chief executives of public companies were granted stock options. Most firms still depended on bonuses and profit sharing to motivate and reward their senior managers. As the nineteen-eighties progressed, and the Dow tripled, stock options began to look much less risky. Thanks to the startling growth of firms that used them heavily, such as Microsoft and Intel, they also became fashionable. For blue-chip companies, issuing generous packages of stock options to their managers became a way to mimic the technological dynamism and entrepreneurial culture of Silicon Valley.



Yet the real benefit of granting stock options—or so economists insisted—was that they solved the problem of providing incentives to senior executives. Once again, Michael Jensen was an influential figure. In 1990, Jensen and Kevin Murphy, an economist who is now at the University of Southern California, published an article in the *Harvard Business Review* which argued that even after the events of the eighties the compensation that most senior executives received was barely connected to the performance of their firms. In particular, changes in a firm's stock price had little impact on the take-home pay of its chief executive. "On average, corporate America pays its most important leaders like bureaucrats," Jensen and Murphy concluded. "Is it any wonder then that so many CEOs act like bureaucrats rather than the value-maximizing entrepreneurs companies need to enhance their standing in world markets?"

By 1994, seven in ten chief executives received option grants, and stock options made up about half of their average take-home pay. In the second half of the nineties, so-called "mega-options"—options grants worth at least ten million dollars—became the norm. In 1997, according to the executive-compensation consulting firm Pearl Meyer & Partners, ninety-two of America's top two hundred chief executives received mega-options, with an average value of thirty-one million dollars. A year later, two Harvard economists, Brian J. Hall and Jeffrey Liebman, took another look at managerial pay and confirmed what anybody who followed the financial pages already knew: C.E.O.s weren't paid anything like bureaucrats. They were paid more like rock stars.

Wittingly and unwittingly, Washington encouraged the great giveaway. During the 1992 election campaign, Bill Clinton and Al Gore made a political issue out of lavish C.E.O. pay. A year later, the new Administration limited to a million dollars the tax deductions that corporations could take for executive salaries. The reform turned out to be counterproductive. Since executive stock options weren't counted as regular compensation, corporations had yet another reason to pay their senior managers less in salary and more in options. In 1994, the Financial Accounting Standards Board (F.A.S.B.), the descendant of the Accounting Principles Board, set out to force companies to deduct the value of the stock options they granted from their earnings. Following an intense lobbying campaign by Silicon Valley companies, several leading members of Congress, including Joseph Lieberman and Dianne Feinstein, threatened to put the F.A.S.B. out of business if it went ahead with the change. The board backed down, and the latest official attempt to control corporate avarice came to an end.



"It may surprise you to know that, contrary to your experience, you're actually very happily married."

• •

The rise of the stock option revolutionized the culture of corporate America. The chief executives of blue-chip companies, who in the nineteen-eighties had portrayed Icahn, Pickens, and their ilk as corporate vandals, now embraced the values of the raiders as their own. For decades, the Business Roundtable, a lobbying group that represents the C.E.O.s of dozens of major companies, had stressed the social role that corporations played in their communities, as well as the financial obligations they owed their stockholders. In 1997, the Business Roundtable changed its position statement to read, "The paramount duty of management and board is to the shareholder."

In many cases, the C.E.O.s turned into corporate raiders themselves, albeit internal raiders. Companies like I.B.M., Xerox, and Procter & Gamble, acting on their own volition, fired tens of thousands of workers. Their chief executives insisted that the "downsizing" was necessary to compete effectively, and that was sometimes true. But once the C.E.O.s were in possession of mega-options, they had another motivating factor: an enormous vested interest in boosting their firms' stock price. For the first time, they had an opportunity to create fortunes on a scale hitherto reserved for industrial pioneers like Rockefeller, Morgan, and Gates. In 1997, Michael Eisner, the chairman and chief executive of Walt Disney, earned five hundred and seventy million dollars. A year later, Mel Karmazin, the chief executive of CBS, exercised options worth almost two hundred million dollars.

The scattered protests at these startling payouts notwithstanding, many economists credited the doctrine of shareholder value for reinvigorating American business. In spite of fears that downsizing would devastate communities, the economy thrived, and the total number of jobs in the country increased. Far from being pilloried, ruthless businessmen ended up being lauded. In 1996, one of the most cutthroat, Albert (Chainsaw Al) Dunlap, wrote a best-selling book, "Mean Business," in which he defended the cost-cutting tactics he had perfected at companies like American Can and Scott Paper. "The most important person in any company is the shareholder," Dunlap declared. "I'm not talking here about Wall Street fat cats. Working people and retired men and women have entrusted us with their 401Ks and pension plans for their children's college tuition and their own long-term security. If we're not concerned about them every step of the way, they're screwed."

As long as the economy kept expanding and the stock market kept going up, most Americans were content to avert their eyes from the lopsided manner in which the rewards of the long boom were being distributed. For those who looked closely, though, there was already evidence that executive stock options were sometimes being abused.

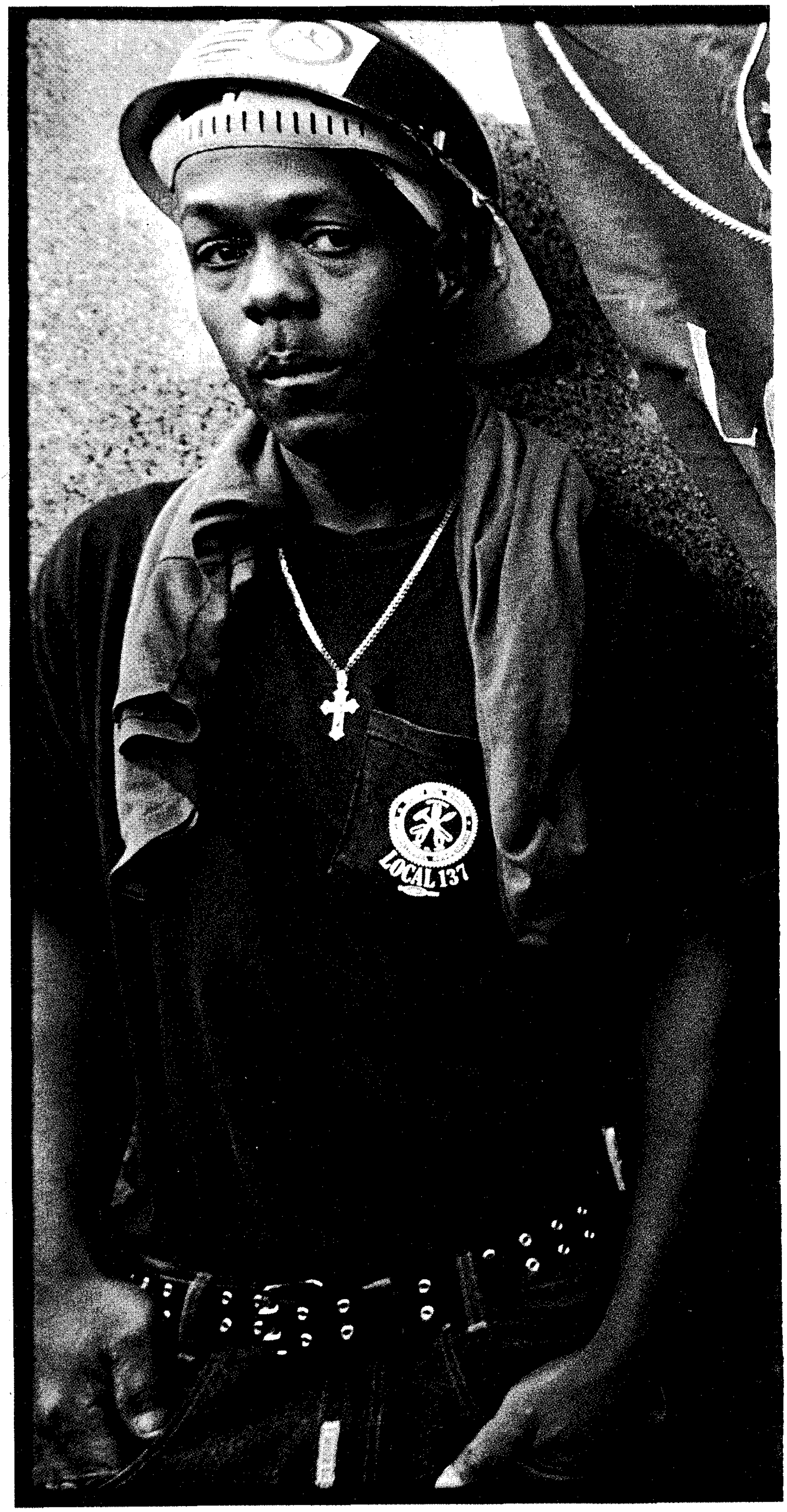
In 1997, David Yermack, an economist at N.Y.U.'s Stern School of Business, published an article in the *Journal of Finance* in which he noted that companies carefully time the dates on which they grant stock options to their chief executives. Typically, firms that have good earnings news to announce award the options just before they release their quarterly reports, so that the strike price is fixed before investors bid up the company's stock and the new options increase in value. Companies with bad earnings to report tend to delay the granting of options until after the earnings announcement, when the stock price will have already fallen, thereby reducing the strike price. This finding strongly implied that senior executives were using inside information for their own benefit, which might well be illegal, although no such case has ever been brought to court. "It looks a lot like insider trading," Yermack said recently.

Another example of managerial self-enrichment was the increasingly common—and perfectly legal—practice of companies purchasing their own shares from stockholders and then retiring them. According to George Fenn and Nellie Liang, two economists at the Federal Reserve Board, most stock buybacks are intended to increase the value of executive stock options by reducing the number of shares that a company has outstanding, making it possible to report increased earnings per share even if total earnings don't rise at all. This sort of financial engineering can boost a firm's stock price in the short run, but it can also do long-term damage. During the nineteen-nineties, I.B.M., Disney, and many other companies borrowed heavily, partly to finance buybacks. Consequently, corporate liabilities are now higher than ever, and companies like Disney are struggling under heavy debt loads.

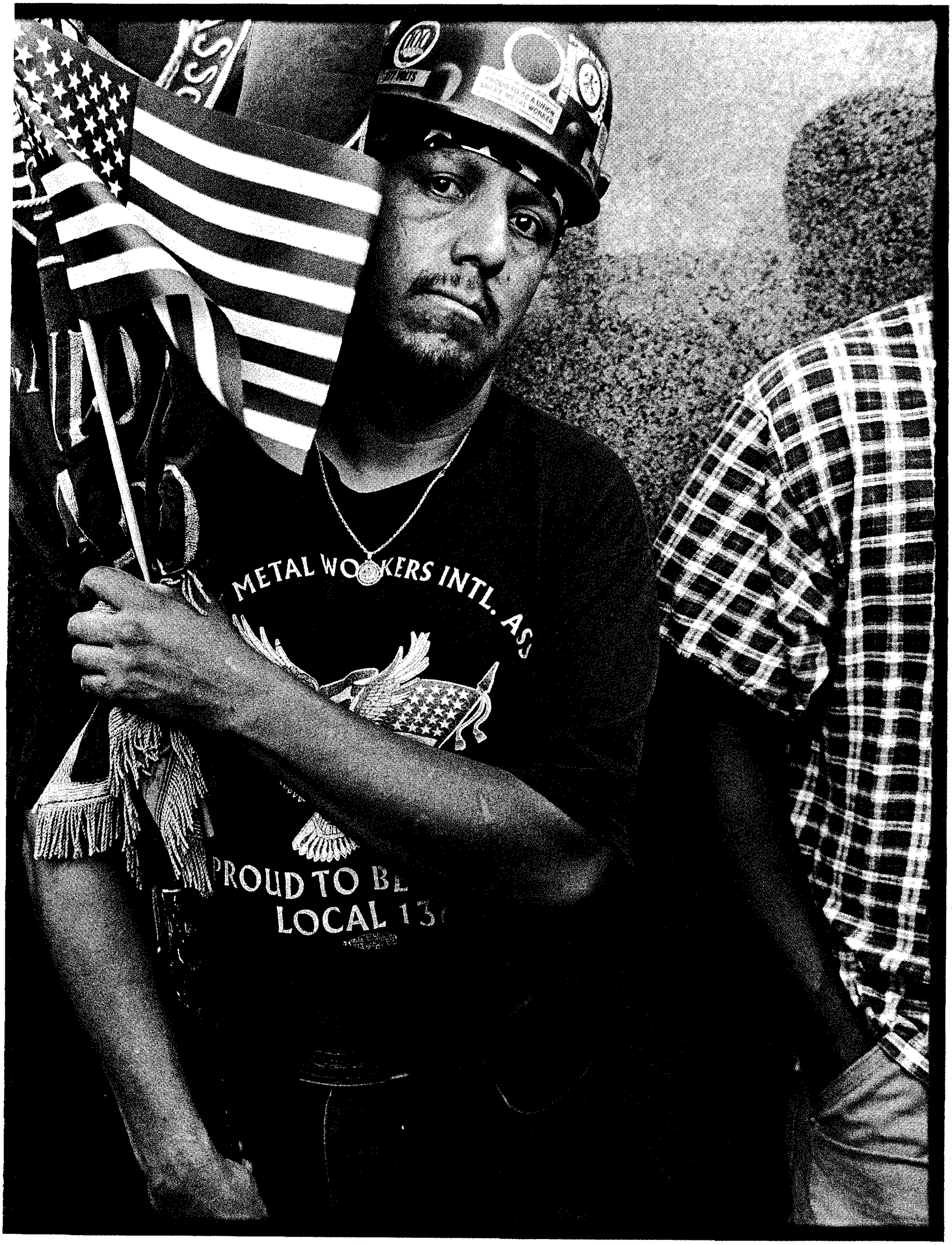
At the same time, many firms exploited the lax accounting treatment of stock options to exaggerate their profitability. Sanford C. Bernstein, a New York brokerage firm, calculated that if all the companies in the S. & P. 500 index had expensed the stock options they issued between 1995 and 2000 their profits would have grown at an annual rate of only six per cent, rather than the nine per cent they reported.

As the Nasdaq headed for 5,000, even some leading advocates of the shareholder-value movement called for changes in the design of stock options. In early 1999, Alfred Rappaport, a consultant who wrote the management text "Creating Shareholder Value," published an article in the *Harvard Business Review* in which he pointed out, "Under current compensation schemes, senior managers are rewarded even when their companies underperform." The vertiginous rise in the Nasdaq and the Dow meant that nearly anybody who was lucky enough to be in charge of a public company stood to get very rich, however lacklustre his performance. Rappaport proposed indexing the strike price of executive stock options to the Dow or the Nasdaq. This way, he explained, the options would rise in value only if the stock outperformed the market, and chief executives would have to earn their fortunes.

Despite the eminent sense of this proposal, nobody in corporate America paid any heed to it. Under the nonsensical accounting rules covering options,



SEPTEMBER 11, 2002, 8:30 A.M. *Sheet-metal workers on Church Street, across from*


METAL WORKERS INTL. ASS
PROUD TO BE
LOCAL 13

Ground Zero, *wait to go up to the viewing platform. Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.*

the value of indexed options had to be deducted from earnings, whereas the value of ordinary options didn't. Businesses weren't willing to reduce their earnings by making the switch. Until very recently, only one firm in the country, Level 3 Communications, a computer-networking company, indexed its executive stock options to a broad market average.

Worse still, many companies repriced their senior executives' stock options at a lower level whenever the stock price fell. The chip company Advanced Micro Devices, for example, repriced the options of its founder, Jerry Sanders III, no fewer than six times, allowing him to make untold millions of dollars while his firm's stock performed modestly. The software company Oracle followed the same practice. In 2000, Larry Ellison, Oracle's already wealthy founder, made seven hundred million dollars by cashing in some low-priced options shortly before his firm's stock price collapsed.

It is hard to think of a better example of what is wrong with corporate America. When the firm's stock price does well, the people in charge make out like lottery winners. When the stock price plummets, they get another set of chances to win. The scheme, in its audacity, and its logic, is almost beautiful. Graef Crystal, an expert on executive pay, who wrote the book "In Search of Excess: The Overcompensation of American Executives," told me recently that if you combine a volatile stock with a willingness to reprice the stock options "then you have created a money machine, an antigravity device, which guarantees that the senior executives will get super-rich."

The most insidious aspect of executive stock options is that—especially in tough times—they give senior managers a strong incentive to mislead investors about the true condition of their companies. Even before the current raft of financial scandals, more and more firms were resorting to accounting skullduggery, exaggerating their revenues and understating their costs.

Economists like Michael Jensen largely ignored this disturbing development, but inside the accounting world it was well known. Under the American system of corporate governance, which hasn't changed much since the nineteen-thirties, public companies provide an earnings update every quarter, and release a more detailed, audited report every twelve months. In preparing their financial results, firms rely on the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, a lengthy set of rules that the S.E.C. and the big accounting firms agree upon. The rules are designed to provide a fair picture of how much money a company is making after subtracting its expenses from its revenues, but a determined management can interpret them in many different ways.

In 1993, Howard Schilit, a professor of accounting at American University, in Washington, D.C., published a book about the tricks that companies use to boost their earnings. Back then, most people who weren't C.P.A.s assumed that (outside Hollywood, anyway) accounting standards were clear and exacting, but Schilit had uncovered dozens of ways in which firms can manipulate their results. His book, "Financial Shenanigans: How to Detect Accounting Gimmicks and Fraud in Financial Reports," identified seven accounting dodges ranging from sleight of hand to outright fraud: (1) recording revenue too soon or of questionable quality; (2) recording bogus revenue; (3) boosting income with onetime gains; (4) shifting current expenses to a later or an earlier period; (5) failing to record liabilities or improperly reducing them; (6) shifting current revenue to a later period; (7) shifting future expenses to the current period as a special charge.

The following year, Schilit founded the Center for Financial Research & Analysis, a company that monitors corporate financial statements and issues warnings to its clientele of institutional investors. As the decade progressed, the number of warnings increased. "The accounting problems didn't suddenly happen in the last six months or twelve months," Schilit told me not long ago. "They were horrendous in the period

LIGHT GLASS STILL-LIFE

An empty tumbler
half filled with the troubled light
of a winter dawn,

the gray out of which
all the blood of darkness had
gradually drained:

it looks like itself
in just the same way that it
looks like other things

—but not like light, which
cannot look like anything
although (or because?)

likeness itself is
a part of the shadowing
light sheds on tumblers

at dawn, half filling
them with the stuff appearance
is also made from.

The tumbler, then (half
Like some x or y, half not),
Always seems to reign

Over itself as
If it, too, were one of its
Own subjects, like the

Representations
With which the visible world
Is always being

Refilled, even as
The stuff of representing—
Authoritative

Black-and-white—itself
Yields definition to the
Gray of resemblance.

And all the while *like*
Keeps on coming as close to
Is as you can get

—Ever hope to get—
Philosopher, with all your
Whatever it is

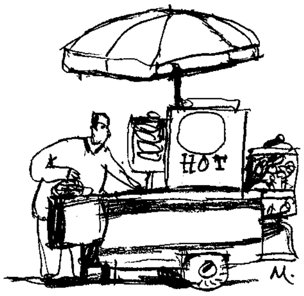
That would make this glass
Overflowing with glassness
A mere . . . An only . . .

—*John Hollander*

from 1997 onward." Schilit and his colleagues often received a hostile reaction when they publicly questioned a company's earnings. "People got very angry," Schilit recalled. "The amount of money that C.E.O.s were making from out-of-control option plans was astounding, but everybody who was around them was happy, because they were also getting rich. They didn't want somebody raising questions."

In September, 1994, Schilit issued a warning about C.U.C., a Connecticut-based direct-marketing company that sold memberships in discount clubs, such as Shoppers Advantage. Its earnings had been rising sharply—partly because the company had been treating some of its marketing costs as capital expenditures, which allowed it to make them appear much smaller. If a firm spends three hundred million dollars on a state-of-the-art factory, say, it can spread the cost over thirty years rather than immediately charging the full amount to its profit-and-loss account. But marketing expenditures, such as advertising and direct mailing, are not really long-lasting investments. In treating them as such, C.U.C. was using shenanigan No. 4. The firm had also taken a number of "restructuring charges," to cover the costs of closing factories, making payments to laid-off workers, and so on. Such charges are often used as a slush fund. Firms deliberately write off more money than they need, and then they use some of the leftover cash to boost future earnings—a case of shenanigan No. 7.

In early 1997, Schilit and his colleagues issued another report on C.U.C.

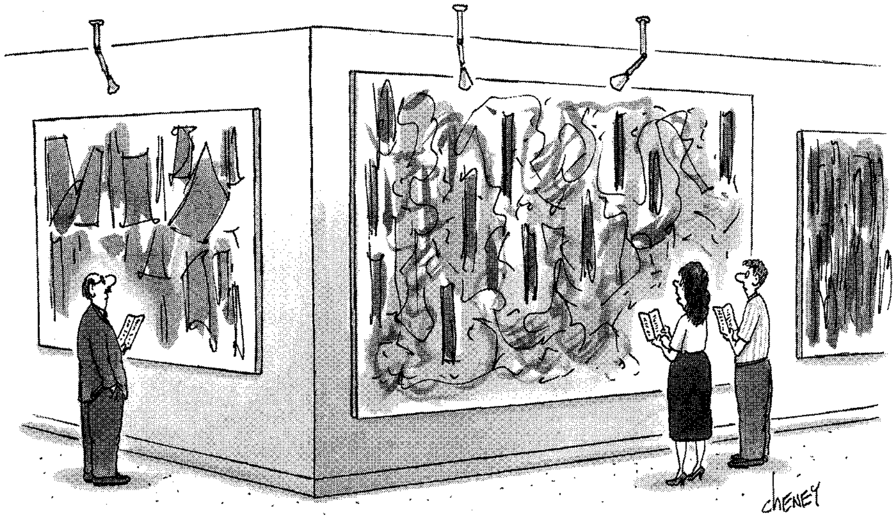


The warnings enraged Walter Forbes, C.U.C.'s chief financial officer, but investors didn't take much notice. Between September, 1996, and April, 1998, C.U.C.'s stock price doubled, as the firm merged with a big franchising company, H.F.S., and changed its name to Cendant. Forbes became chairman of the merged firm. Days after the stock price peaked, the company announced it had uncovered accounting irregularities that had inflated its earnings by more than a hundred million dollars, and the stock fell almost fifty per cent. In July, 1998, Forbes resigned. In June, 2000, three former employees in Cendant's accounting division pleaded guilty to fraud. Forbes and another former C.U.C. executive are awaiting trial on charges that they inflated earnings for almost a decade.

Cendant was a major financial scandal. Almost twenty billion dollars of shareholder value was wiped out, and the company ended up paying $2.8 billion to settle shareholder suits, but the story rarely made it out of the business section. Schilit told me, "When a bull market is raging, investors lose a lot of money on Cendant, and the advisers, the investment bankers, say, 'O.K., Joe. Fraud can happen. But you made a lot of money on the previous five deals I brought you.' Investors tend to grit their teeth and say, 'Yes, I got nailed on this one, but I did make money on the five other deals.' "

Around the time that the truth about Cendant emerged, an accounting scandal forced Al Dunlap to resign from Sunbeam, the appliance maker where he had been wielding his chainsaw, and ramping up the value of nearly four million stock options. Dunlap denied any wrongdoing, but in 2001 the S.E.C. charged him and four of his former colleagues with fraud, claiming that they had given a false impression of Sunbeam's business by inflating its "stock price and thus improving its value as an acquisition target." Sunbeam eventually filed for bankruptcy, and its stockholders—the most important people in the company, according to Dunlap—ended up with nothing.

The frauds at Cendant and Sunbeam were dwarfed by an even bigger accounting scandal, at Waste Management, the largest trash-hauling company



"It's good, but it doesn't say 'bipolar.'"

• •

in the country. Schilit first warned investors about aggressive accounting in 1995, but the company's stock kept rising. In July, 1998, Waste Management merged with one of its biggest rivals, U.S.A. Waste Services, and the next spring its stock reached a record high. A few months later, the firm announced that it was reviewing its accounting records. The S.E.C. launched an investigation, which discovered that between 1992 and 1996 Waste Management had exaggerated its profits by $1.43 billion.

Cendant and Waste Management were both scrappy firms trying to crash their way into the financial establishment. Lucent Technologies, the former equipment-making division of A.T. & T., was the bluest of blue chips. Lucent went public in April, 1996; within three years its stock had risen eightfold, and it had become the most widely held stock in America. In 1998, Lucent generated about a billion dollars in net income. Investors were expecting the firm's rapid growth to continue over the next year, and the company was doing nothing to dispel the idea that it would. But in reality Lucent's sales were slowing, and its inventories were rising. The company included in its earnings gains from its corporate pension plan (shenanigan No. 3), started capitalizing software expenditures (shenanigan No. 4), and created new reserves related to acquisitions (shenanigan No. 7). In February and May of 1999, the Center for Financial Research & Analysis issued two warnings about Lucent's financial condition. "There wasn't one thing that leaped out at you," Howard Schilit recalled. "There was just a whole series of little tricks here and there."

As usual, investors didn't pay much attention. That November, Lucent's stock hit eighty dollars. On January 6, 2000, Schilit and his colleagues issued a third warning, detailing how Lucent had artificially boosted its earnings by reversing a previous restructuring charge. A week later, Lucent announced that it would miss Wall Street's earnings estimates for the last quarter of 1999, and its stock fell sharply. Two and half years later, it is trading below two dollars.

"What Lucent taught a lot of people, me included, was that this could happen anywhere," Schilit said. "These blue-chip companies were just as susceptible to accounting trickery as the small ones."

If investors had been paying more attention, they would have seen that Schilit wasn't the only one warning that something was wrong with the upbeat figures corporate America was releasing. Between the fourth quarter of 1996 and the fourth quarter of 2000, the firms in the S. & P. 500 reported that their earnings per share had increased from $38.73 to $54.78, with not a single down quarter. Even at the end of 2000, most big companies were predicting further rises in profits. But according to the Commerce Department, which measures the gross domestic product and its components, corporate profits peaked in 1997, at close to eight hundred billion dollars. Thereafter, they fell sharply, to just above seven hundred and twenty billion dollars in 1998. Profits didn't recover their 1997 level until 2000, whereupon they slumped again in 2001.

There are two possible ways to explain the glaring difference between the Commerce Department's numbers and corporate America's. The government calculates profits from corporate tax filings, which often contain lower estimates of earnings than the filings that firms present to Wall Street. (For some reason, firms feel no urge to exaggerate their profits to the I.R.S.) Moreover, the government gathers numbers from all types of enterprises, big and small, whereas the S. & P. 500 is composed of the largest corporations in the country. It is at least conceivable that the decline in profitability that the Commerce Department detected was concentrated among tax avoiders and small firms. But a far more convincing explanation is that the vast majority of major corporations were artificially inflating their profits. Instead of admitting that rising wages and intense competition were corroding their earnings, they were resorting to subterfuge.

The men heading these companies faced an unenviable dilemma. At the stock market's peak, many of them had options worth tens of millions of dollars. But this wealth was alarmingly evanescent: with a plunge in the company's stock price, their options would be rendered worthless. In these circumstances, it would have taken a brave man to tell the truth about what was happening to corporate earnings. Such corporate statesmen were in short supply. Far more common were senior executives, who, in Alan Greenspan's words, sought to "harvest" some of their stock-market gains before it was too late.

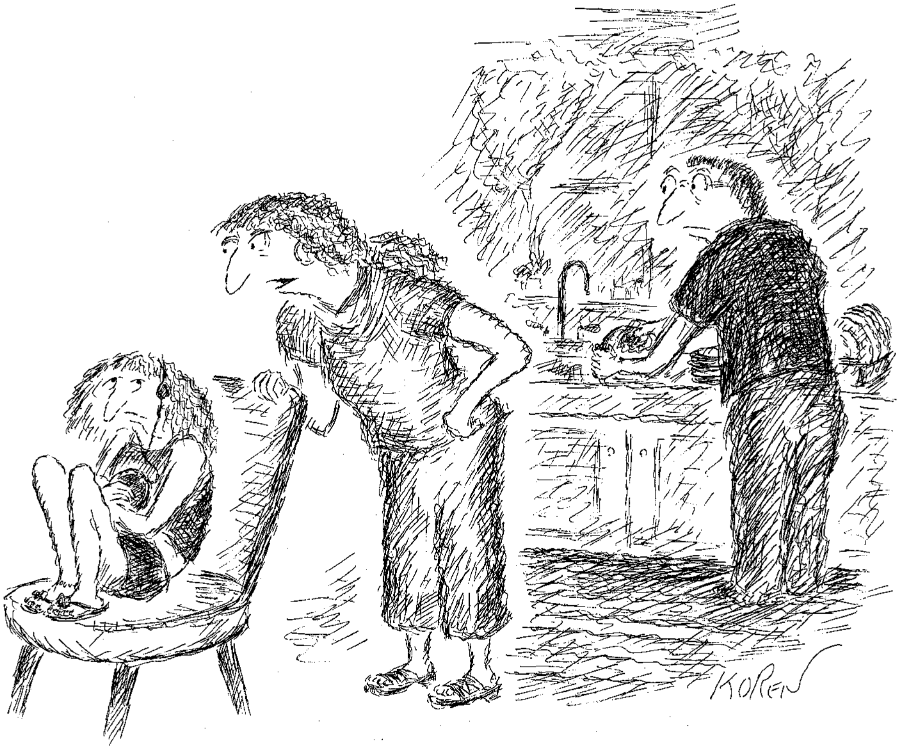
Even Michael Jensen, the great defender of big payouts for C.E.O.s, now concedes that the design of enormous stock-options packages had a disastrous effect on corporate ethics. If he had his way, Jensen told me recently, every standard executive stock option would be scrapped. Instead, managers would receive options with a strike price that went up every year. "I was a defender of the move toward stock options and more liberal rewards for C.E.O.s. But I'm now a critic of where we got to," Jensen said. "For a long time now, we've had a situation in which the stock prices of many firms have been too high," he explained. "That is to managers what heroin is to a drug addict." When stock prices are overvalued, managers get into an elaborate game with Wall Street to try and justify them. "But if they are too high you can't possibly justify them. So you keep struggling for ways to get the earnings up, to generate the reports that the market is expecting to see." Whenever a company does admit that its earnings aren't growing as rapidly as investors are expecting, its stock price gets crushed and its management gets pilloried. "Once you train managers by penalizing them for telling the truth and rewarding them for lying, then that kind of unethical behavior gets extended to all sorts of things," Jensen said.

Jensen's discovery that executive stock options can have perverse results is rather belated, but his analysis of the last few years is hard to fault. Stock options, instead of spurring corporate leaders to build businesses that would create wealth for decades to come, encouraged them to manage for the short term, tailoring their actions to the demands of Wall Street stock analysts; and, in all too many cases, the practice turned them into crooks. WorldCom, for example, the second-biggest long-distance phone company in the country, classed billions of dollars in routine expenditures, such as payments the firm made to other telephone companies for connecting calls, as capital investments, which made it look a lot more profitable than it really was. Global Crossing, a startup company that built a transatlantic communications network, swapped fibre-optic capacity with other telecommunications companies in order to create fake revenues. Dynegy, an energy-trading firm, recorded phantom trades to do the same thing. Xerox, Qwest, and Rite Aid are all accused of inflating their revenues.

None of these accounting shenanigans emerged until after the Nasdaq crashed, in April, 2000, but they were all similar to the ones Schilit had identified in the nineties. At Enron, the finagling was more complicated. The wrongdoing appears to have begun in earnest toward the end of 1997, when the credit-rating agencies (Moody's and Standard & Poor's) became increasingly concerned about the debt that Enron had taken on as it expanded from a gas-pipeline company into areas like energy trading and online commerce. If the credit-rating agencies had downgraded Enron's debt, its stock price would have fallen, which would have had a disastrous impact on the massive stock-option packages that virtually all the firm's senior executives owned. In order to forestall this eventuality, Andrew Fastow, Enron's chief financial officer, set up a series of investment partnerships, with names like Chewco and LJM1, which were used to reduce Enron's debt and disguise its losses on new ventures. An investigative committee appointed by Enron's board later concluded that "the transactions between Enron and the LJM partnerships resulted in Enron increasing its reported financial results by more than a billion dollars, and enriching Fastow and his co-investors by tens of millions of dollars at Enron's expense." Just as important, the partnerships helped to maintain Enron's stock price long enough for the firm's senior management to cash in hundreds of millions of dollars of stock options.

Jensen has been looking closely at Enron. In a recent working paper, he and another economist, Joseph Fuller, pointed out that "Enron was in many ways an extraordinary company. It boasted significant global assets, true achievements, dramatic innovations, and a promising long-run future." The firm's one big problem was its outsize stock-market valuation, which in August, 2001, reached almost seventy billion dollars. In order to justify this outlandish figure, Wall Street analysts were demanding higher earnings, and Enron's top executives were casting around for ways to meet these demands. "If Enron's management had confronted the analysts with courage and conviction and resisted their relentless focus on outsize earnings growth, the company could have avoided questionable actions taken to please the analysts and the markets," Jensen and Fuller conclude. "The result could well have been a lower-valued but stable and profitable company."

A corollary of this argument is that Kenneth Lay and his colleagues were not necessarily deceitful or venal people; nor were the heads at WorldCom, Dynegy, and Global Crossing: they were all



"*Excuse me, Missy! Unilateralism has no place in this family.*"

victims of circumstance. "It is important to recognize that this doesn't come about as a result of crooks," Jensen insisted. "This comes about as a result of honest people being subjected to forces that they don't understand. The forces are very strong, and this evolves over a period of time. You end up with highly moral, honest people doing dishonest things. It wasn't as if the Mafia had taken over corporate America. We are too quick to say—and the media feed this—that if a bad thing happens it's because a bad person did it, and that person had evil intentions. It is much more likely that there were some bad systems in place."

What Jensen doesn't say, of course, is that he and other economists were at least partly responsible for the compensation systems that unleashed an orgy of self-enrichment. In retrospect, Jensen and his colleagues were hopelessly naïve in assuming that executive stock options wouldn't be abused. If the past thirty years have demonstrated anything, it is that the avarice of America's corporate leaders is practically unlimited, and so is their power to run companies in their own interest. "When I did my first study, in 1973, the average C.E.O. of a major company was making about forty-five times the average pay of the workers," Graef Crystal reminded me recently. "When I wrote my book, in 1991, the pay ratio was a hundred and forty. Now it's five hundred." Under the light-handed regulation of public companies that has been fashionable since the Reagan era, the onus has fallen on auditors, boards of directors, and outside stockholders to restrain the selfishness of senior executives, but none of these groups have proved up to the task.

Even before the Enron scandal, it was clear that many auditors were not doing their jobs properly. In the case of Waste Management, for example, Arthur Andersen complained about many of the bookkeeping ruses that the senior managers were using, but it approved the company's financial statements nonetheless. Had Andersen done otherwise, it would have risked losing a lucrative client. Between 1991 and 1997, Andersen billed Waste Management $7.5 million in audit fees and $11.8 million in fees for other services, such as work on tax and regulatory issues. Meanwhile, Andersen Consulting billed Waste Management six million dollars, $3.7 million of which was related to a strategic review designed to "increase shareholder value."

Boards of directors often end up as patsies for the senior managers they are supposed to be monitoring. As Graef Crystal has been pointing out for years, the typical American board is composed of ten friends of the chairman, a token woman, and a token representative of a minority group. All too often, chief executives largely determined their own compensation arrangements, and the board rubber-stamped them.

"I think there were some people who were greedy, and who felt nobody was watching and they could get away with anything," Carl McCall, the state comptroller of New York, said when I spoke to him last month. McCall recently served on a New York Stock Exchange panel that recommended a set of reforms for companies wanting to list themselves on the Exchange. After the reforms are adopted, every company on the N.Y.S.E. must have a majority of independent directors on its board, and three of the company's committees—the audit committee, the compensation committee, and the nominating and governance committee—must be made up solely of independent directors. (At the moment, members of the audit committee have to be independent, but companies are not even required to have compensation, nominating, or governance committees.)

These are worthwhile reforms, but, as Paul Volcker points out, "There's a limit on the supervisory, skeptical role that you can expect a board of directors to provide. In a successful company, the directors are going to have a collegial feeling. They have been appointed by the C.E.O. They are going to be heavily influenced by what he says. They are going to give him the benefit of the doubt." Moreover, a management team that is determined to act crookedly can often hide its fraud. At Enron, the outside directors included a former accounting professor and a former federal energy regulator, but neither of them was aware of the extent of what had been happening to the company until they read it in the newspapers.

Of course, senior executives are ultimately responsible to the owners of the company: the stockholders. But it

was the weakness of the stockholders that justified the use of executive stock options to begin with, and little has changed in this regard. Most investors will simply sell their stock in a company if they see something they don't like. During the nineteen-nineties, there was another reason that investors were reluctant to police rapacious executives: most were too greedy themselves to question the startling earnings growth that supported the bull market. They gleefully accepted the optimistic line that Wall Street and corporate America fed to them, pausing only to inspect their monthly statements from Fidelity and Charles Schwab. It was only after the bubble burst that they were shocked to discover that many of the schemes they had been sold were illusory, and that some senior executives were dishonest.

What now? Early in the summer, Hank Paulson, the publicity-shy chairman and chief executive of the Goldman, Sachs Group, astonished many of Goldman's bankers when he appeared at the National Press Club, in Washington, and lambasted some of his fellow chief executives, the very people with whom his firm does business. Never in his lifetime, Paulson declared, had America's business leaders been held in less repute, and, he added, much of the scrutiny was deserved. When I caught up with Paulson a few weeks ago, he said that the media frenzy and political outcry about corporate malfeasance would last until the November congressional elections, but he expected a letup thereafter. "I really believe that there are more well-run companies in the United States than there are anywhere else in the world," Paulson said. "Clearly, the U.S. economy is not full of Enrons and WorldComs. But they did illuminate flaws in the system." Greed took over in a number of cases, Paulson added, but "much of what has happened can't be explained by something as simple as greed." Greed didn't create investors' desire for steady earnings increases, or the stock-market bubble, or the lax accounting rules. Now that some of these issues were finally being addressed, Paulson was encouraged. "I actually think we'll be out of this sooner than some people think. And I also think we'll emerge stronger for what we've been through."

The optimists could yet be proved correct as some of the reforms take hold. But there are also discouraging signs. Too many companies remain reluctant to offend investors by telling the truth about their finances; the government still hasn't forced companies to acknowledge the true cost of the stock options they issue; and neither recession nor scandal has halted the corporate practice of bestowing gigantic options packages on senior managers. In 2001, according to Pearl Meyer & Partners, more than half of America's top two hundred chief executives received mega-options, with an average value of more than fifty million dollars. Virtually all of them were granted with fixed strike prices. Indexed options, although increasingly popular in Britain and other parts of Europe, remain rare in the United States.

An effective compensation scheme rewards people for improving things that are under their control. If a cobbler mends more shoes, he deserves the extra payments he receives. If a slugger hits more home runs, he deserves a higher salary. If a manager reorganizes a firm and makes it operate more effectively, he, too, deserves more money, but stock options are a poor way to measure his contribution, because their value is beyond his control. Investors determine a firm's stock price, and they often do it for reasons that have more to do with crowd psychology than with a rational analysis of how the business is doing. The actions of a chief executive frequently bear only a distant relation to the behavior of his firm's stock. Even stock options that are indexed to broad market averages, such as the S. & P. 500, suffer from this weakness. If war breaks out in the Middle East, the chief executives of Exxon and Chevron will see their stock options soar in value because investors are bidding up the price of all oil stocks.

Managers ought to be paid for improving how their companies serve their customers, not for improving how investors rate their stock. "Everybody gets rewarded in a bull market—the good, the bad, and the ugly," Volcker pointed out to me. "Nobody gets rewarded in a down market. And it's not that everybody's a genius in a bull market and a dolt in a down market. They are the same people." After giving the matter much thought, Volcker has concluded that it is time to scrap stock options. "They are subject to abuse and temptation in a way that's almost irrefutable," he said. "And I think we ought to get rid of them."

Volcker is surely correct. And reforming executive pay should be part of a broader program to save capitalism from the capitalists. In the nineteen-thirties, Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized that the real threat to the system comes not from protesters on the streets but from the business leaders themselves, whose greed and self-dealing undermine the public consent on which they ultimately depend. There are at least two ways that C.E.O.s could be reined in. In Germany, most big firms have two boards: an operating board, which deals with the day-to-day running of the company, and a supervisory board, which oversees the actions of the senior managers. The chief executive doesn't even have a seat on the supervisory board. In Britain, the post of chairman and chief executive is often split, so the company has two powerful figures at the top, who can keep an eye on each other. Americans often presume that their system of corporate governance is the best in the world, but there are things to be learned from practices elsewhere. Above all, it is time to downsize the myth of the all-powerful C.E.O. Effective leadership is one aspect of corporate success, but it is by no means the only one. History, competition, and luck also play crucial roles. And most C.E.O.s are eminently replaceable.

In recent weeks, senior executives of WorldCom and Adelphia Communications have been paraded before the cameras in handcuffs. Paulson and Volcker both told me that they found these pictures unsavory. Maybe they were, but they sent a salutary message to other senior executives: public companies are social organizations with social responsibilities. Unless this message is heeded, the furor over Kenneth Lay and his fellow corporate scoundrels will gradually fade. And, once the economy and the stock market revive, the greed cycle will start up again. ♦

FICTION

SAFETY PROCEDURES

BY NADINE GORDIMER

Lorrie didn't want me to go and was embarrassed to come out with it. My work means that we have lived in different parts of the world, and in each there has always been something to be afraid of. Gangsters; extremist political groups, right and left, tossing bombs into restaurants; hijacks; holdups; a city sitting plumb on the line of an earthquake fault. We have long had a compact, with ourselves, with life. Life is dangerous. We live with that, and with one certainty: that fear is the real killer. We've never gone in for steel grilles on our doors or been afraid to walk in the streets. With sensible precautions, we've succeeded in keeping our children free. But these last few months there have been a number of airline disasters not really accounted for—pilot error, air-traffic control affected by ground-staff strikes, the possibility of a fellow-passenger with the Damocles weapon not overhead but down in his boot soles. Who has the black box that really knows? And, only a week ago, two people shot dead while queuing to check in at an airline desk. We usually make love the night before I leave, I kiss the children in the morning, and we all accept naturally that I'll phone the moment I can use my mobile in the terminal of my arrival—even if it's nighttime for Lorrie and daytime for me. It's as much a routine as going to the executive office of my company every day.

—Why'd you let Isa book you on that route?

Lorrie knows that my secretary organizes my schedules with perfect efficiency.

—Why not? It's obvious. It's the best airline to get me where I have to go.

—But the country it belongs to. In some conflict among them all . . . These days.

—For God's sake, you know what the security procedures are like *these days*. Anyway, that airline's country has no connection to any hassle between India and Pakistan, Israel and Palestine—whatever. Since when have we given in to fear of flying, my darling?—Quoting, if I remember correctly, the title of a book we once read.

—No connection that you—we—know of.

But she'd heard what I was really saying: since when do we have a boring, conventional little-wifey scene when the hubby goes off on business? Since when do we cower, you and I, before life as it is?

And then she said something, in that way she has (part of what I love about her), that struck aside my patronizing inference of little-wifeyness.

—You don't know whose enemy you are.

—What're you talking about? I'm nobody's enemy.

—By boarding a plane you become one. The airline's insignia is painted on the tail. Logo of nationality.

I hugged her quickly, in recognition of her special quirky intelligence, and laughed. Our closeness made her smile past the issue. No fuss. That's our way. The company driver picked me up and delivered me to the airport.

Good young Isa had reserved my favorite seat, a window, not too far back in the business-class cabin (the company has decided to be globally politically correct, no more wasteful first-class expenditure), but not near the toilets or the galley—too many people queuing up to pee and too much chatter among the attendants.

There was a long flight ahead with time sliding backward all the way. On these journeys I keep home time; I don't change my watch until I reach time as measured at my destination. I wonder how many hours of my life span I've lost—or maybe gained?—on these many trips across datelines.

I tell people that I actually like to work in planes. In productive isolation among strangers, I can take out my laptop and prepare myself for the meetings and decisions awaiting me. It's not often that there's someone I know on the same flight, and if there is I don't want any change of seat to place me beside an acquaintance. Of course, in recent years there has been the unavoidable distraction of the fold-out TV screen that comes with every seat, and invariably my anonymous neighbor will have the thing set up and flickering away in my peripheral vision, although, thank God, the sound passes directly into the individual's ears, spares mine. The fact is it's never long before I pack away the monitor of my industriousness, the laptop, wrestle a few minutes with the pages of the newspapers offered (why aren't there special tabloid editions of the New York *Times*, the *Herald Tribune*, *Le Figaro*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Corriere della Sera*, et al., for airline distribution?), and then look—gaze—at what's outside the window: nothing. All right. The void that, from the ground, is called "the sky." Intruded on by puffy herds and castles of cloud for a while, scribbled across with a fading jet stream, a chalked rainbow drawn by another plane, out of sight. At other times, an enclosing gray-white element without latitude or longitude or substance—like blindness descended upon the eyes. Perhaps what I'm saying is that I half doze off; there's an in-between form of consciousness that's experienced only up here. The cozy cockpit voice exhorts its charges to sit back and relax. But this state is not relaxation; it's another form of being I have, and have never told anyone about, not even Lorrie (especially, perhaps, not Lorrie—in a marriage it's

DANIEL KOHN, "BROOKLYN TRIO 1" (DETAIL), THREE PANELS, 89" X 18", 2000

possible to give too much about yourself away).

Nothing. Up there, out there, I do not have within me love, sex, wife, children, house, or executive office. I do not have a waiting foreign city with international principals and decisions to be made. Why has no artist—not even the abstractionists—painted this state, attainable only since the invention of passenger aircraft? The gaze. Freedom.

On this trip, I had beside me—I noticed only when the bar trolley paused at my row—a slim middle-aged woman who didn't overflow her space or hog the armrest between us, something, at least, in her favor. We exchanged a "Good evening," and that was that. She was good-looking (as she turned toward me in the brief greeting) in an impersonal way, without any projection of beauty, as if her fiftyish face were something she had assumed as you might take along an umbrella. I dread, on my numerous long flights, having someone in the next seat who wants to talk and will take up a monologue if I don't respond. This one, apparently, wanted conversation no more than I did. She didn't set up her TV screen, either. I was aware that after dinner was served she leaned forward and took a book from her bag.

I suppose it was the food, the wine. I returned to my laptop, to the presence within me of the voice and body of my wife, the hands of my children upon me, the boardroom, the familiar expressions of the faces, and the issues I was to meet. Nothing, replaced by tomorrow. As I worked at my computer and time was lost in passage, the aircraft began to shudder. The seat-belt sign was illuminated. Turbulence—we expect to climb out of it, the cockpit voice reassured us. But my window went black—it was not nightfall—the swollen black of a great forest of storm. Out of nothing: this was the other power, like the opposition of Evil to Good that religions tell us about on earth. I was determined to ignore what became the swooping and staggering of the plane, the teeth-chattering

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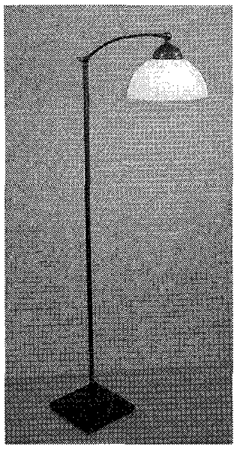

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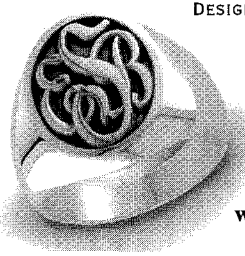

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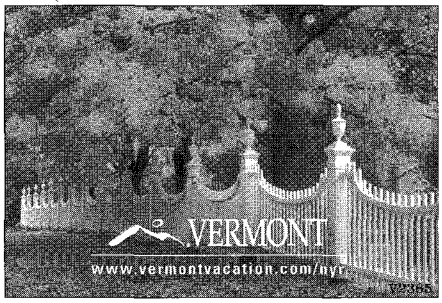

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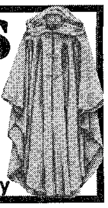

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of overhead lockers, the collision of trolleys, the spilling of glasses. I tried to focus on the screen jiggling on my knees, but my eyes refused to function. As I managed to stow the laptop in a seat pocket, I saw that the woman beside me had put down her book. In a violent lurch of the enraged structure that encased us, the book flung itself from her lap to the floor. I watched it slither into the aisle, where it was joined by shoes that someone had taken off, as we do on long flights, for comfort. Now the cockpit voice commanded us to stay seated, to make sure our seat belts were securely fastened. *For your own safety.*

I'd weathered (that old cliché) a few spells of turbulence in the hundreds of flights I'd survived. There had never in my memory been anything like this. Lorrie feared for me: a hijack. This was a hijack by the elements. Whatever force had us would not let go, no escape by gaining height or losing it. Crashes were sounding from the galley. Two cabin attendants collided, and one fell across a passenger's head. The commands from the cockpit became a gabble. Behind the seats where the woman and I were strapped, trapped, someone was vomiting in heaving waves and gurglings. The plane dropped as if under a great blow and then bounced to this side and that. It wanted to rid itself of us, our laptops, our headsets, our duty-free, the bags of possessions we lug around the world as if our life depended upon them.

Our life.

The voice from the cockpit made itself heard through broken-up amplification: the captain was going to attempt an emergency landing at a military airfield whose name I recognized as a sign that we had been blown off course. A woman was screaming. There were sobs and voices calling out for help—from whom, from where? Praying—to whom, for what? My heart thudded wildly: Lorrie's fear now mine.

I suddenly realized that while everyone was appealing, in the solidarity of terror, to everyone else, the woman beside me and I had not looked at each other, had not spoken. So I turned to her.

Incredible.

She was sitting calmly, with one hand loose upon the other, not clutching—the seat, the armrests, anything—as I was. She was letting the fury of the plane slap her about, her lips at rest, no grimace of the animal fear that was on everyone's face. She flicked her quiet open eyes to acknowledge my presence, this unknown human who was going to die in intimacy beside me. My last woman. And then she turned directly to me, and I heard again the voice that had spoken only once, two words, "Good evening."

—It's all right. The plane will somehow land. You're safe. Everyone is.

I didn't know if she was unbelievably courageous, duped by some religious faith, or mad. She spoke again, her head resisting the tumultuous pulls against her body.

—It won't happen. Because I'm aboard. This last year, I have to tell you, I have tried three times, three different ways, to end my life. Failed. No way out for me. So it seems I can't die—no flight I take will kill.

The order came from the cockpit to assume the emergency-landing position, heads bowed over knees. The plane struck the earth as if it would crack the rock of the world. We descended in a fairly orderly way—those desperate to live pushing through women-and-children-first, I restraining the instinct—on slides let down from the sides of the plane. Banners of flame unfurled behind us as we ran. In the confusion I did not see whether the woman was among us, the saved, all of us.

I'm sure she was. ♦

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Ezra Pound, in Rutherford, New Jersey, 1958.

THE CRITICS

AT THE MUSEUMS

HEAD ON

A Richard Avedon retrospective.

BY ANTHONY LANE

The first image in the new show of Richard Avedon photographs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the picture that visitors will come upon as they enter, is not just the earliest, dating from 1947; it is also the happiest. A small Sicilian boy in a pale cap, his jacket buttoned tight across his chest like the trademark of a vaudeville patsy, stands and delivers his best grin. There is something formal—not fixed, but maybe too decorous for mere cheek—in the width of his smile, and you notice the hands clamped firmly to his sides. It is unlikely that he has been ordered to radiate pleasure (Avedon is not his uncle, or a fearsome aunt, and this is no family snap), but that is how the child has chosen to present himself, and the choice, as in all portraiture, is like a ticket that enables both artist and sitter to cross into the realms of the true. Avedon sees what Nadar saw, almost a century before in France, or, for that matter, what Van Dyck saw when confronted with an English king: there is poetry in the pose.

As visitors leave the exhibit, an hour or more later, they may be forgiven for wondering where the smiles went. By Avedon's own admission, one of the first photographs that he took as a boy, gathering his courage and his box Brownie, was of Rachmaninoff, and the composer would feel mournfully at home in this environment. Is there any clue, when you mount the steps of the Met and read the banner title, "Richard Avedon: Portraits," that you are heading for the retrospective of a working tragedian? The last time the museum laid on an Avedon show, in 1978, the core of the work was his fashion photography, lithe with kinetic wit. As a general rule, tragedy tends not to get invited to any universe that contains Givenchy dresses, or the features of Audrey Hepburn; but Hepburn, this time around, is notable by her absence. Avedon—transposed into the person of Fred Astaire, a switch that flatters both parties—famously turned her unorthodox grace into the title and talisman of a movie, but at the Met there is little inkling of "Funny Face," the flip side of Avedon's shining coin. True, we get Chaplin, an irrepressible Pan, poking two fingers above his temples to create a pair of quick horns, as if to confess that the very devilry of his genius had led him into temptation. On the other hand, there is no Louis Armstrong, no Jimmy Durante, no Jacques Cousteau—none of those other souls, enshrined by Avedon, whose purpose in life was to add the fizz to the gin, and to make that life both lighter and more adventurous. Something twisted, which one could just about read as a grin, may be happening to the jaw of Oscar Levant, shot in 1972. But Levant was a gargoyle, to be treasured as the ugliest runt ever to grace a movie screen, and if you inspect the contacts of that session, reproduced in Avedon's book "Evidence" (1994), you will discover Levant grinding his way through every known rictus of despair until Avedon finally traps him in the most clownlike, the most collapsed, and, by a long stretch, the most mortal.

The show unfolds, majestically, in the cavernous hangars of the Tisch galleries, which previously housed an array of Renaissance tapestries. Photography need no longer bide its time, or bite its nails, in underground dens or unvisited wings of the major museums; it is right there in the throne rooms, and in order to reach Avedon's Groucho, say—balding, black-sweatered, solemnly dreaming of something off-camera—you have to stride through a vista of Rodins. The walls of the show are gray, growing darker and duskier as you proceed, as if the day were winding down, and the whole place were being sucked into the shadows. New partitions have been created, so convincingly solid that at times the Met seems to have mixed itself an instant church; turn right immediately after the entrance, and you gaze down a perspective of square arches, framing to perfection, at the far end, a trio of lusty young men. They are part of Andy Warhol's Factory, photographed as a group in 1969, but the ease of their nakedness, along with their faraway eyes under tangled caps of hair, suggests a panel of cinquecento martyrs, serenely pondering their imminent arrival in Paradise. As Andy might say, that's sort of nearly great.

The show is arranged in chronological order. The first room is dedicated to the nineteen-fifties, and thus to the final flowering, or the scarcely tolerable withering, of energetic minds whose bodies have not been able to keep pace. "Youth never moves me," Avedon once said, and viewers may flinch at being plunged without preamble into the deep end of age. The portrait of Ezra Pound, reproduced here, was taken in the summer of 1958, after the poet was released from St. Elizabeth's psychiatric hospital in Washington, D.C.; two days later, he would leave his native America forever. There is so much going on here before you even rise to the face: the skin like rock or elephant hide in the hollow of his throat, the shirt pulled aside as if to greet a firing squad. Is Pound blinking at the novel glare of freedom? Or is this simply the tight-eyed grimace that we remember from childhood—the screwed-up flesh believing that, if it clenches hard enough, the trouble in the spirit will go away?

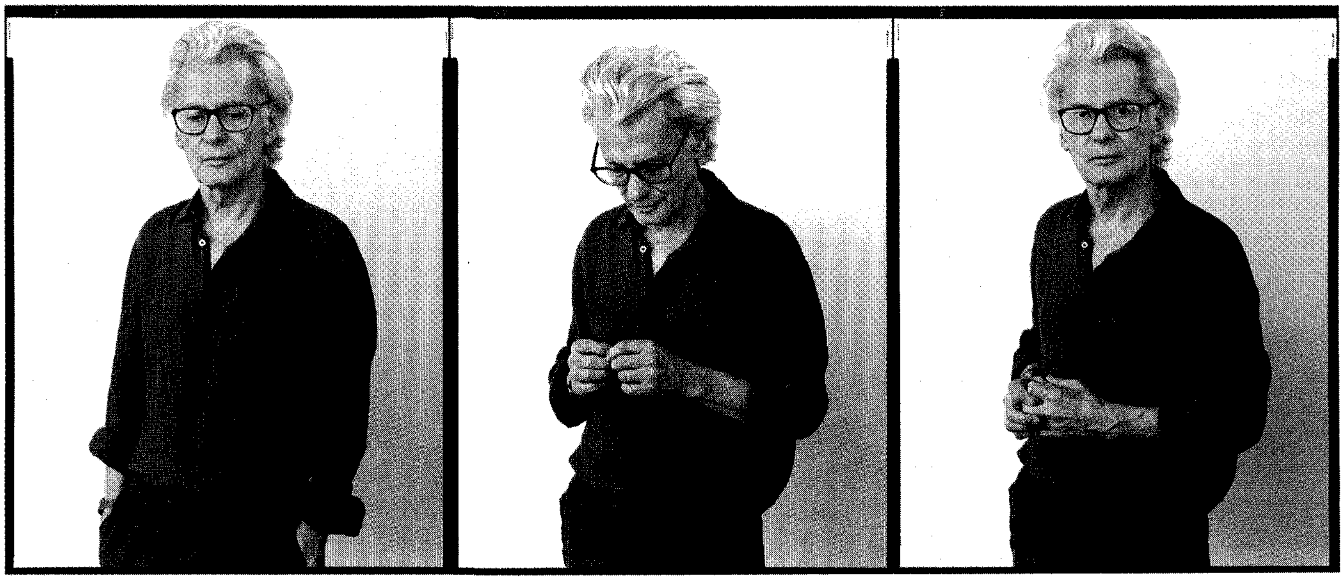
There is no reason, of course, that a

show so careful to trace the lineaments of distress should not find time and space for jokes. (Indeed, the two are ideal bedfellows; consider the work of Samuel Beckett, one of whose poems is taped to Avedon's bathroom mirror, and who is honored here with a double portrait, his lowered head as noble and startling as an osprey's.) Avedon is too much of a laugher and a live wire to keep his pleasure under wraps, but, in the context of the Met, that amusement surfaces less in the joy of his subjects than in their juxtaposition. One longs for these sitters to spring, if only for ten minutes, from the flattened confines of the photographic print and mingle, wackos, wallflowers, and all, in the gallery hush. To take Room 3: What could Dorothy Parker conceivably say that would not offend the Daughters of the American Revolution, richly sashed and gowned? As for Giacometti, he would cast one hooded glance at Marilyn Monroe and think, Forget the stick figures, from now on I do *curves*.

These clashes find their fullest expression as Avedon hits the sixties and seventies. What matters here is not so much the heat of his own political affiliations—he was arrested in 1972, during an anti-war demonstration, and jailed for civil disobedience—as the coolness with which he registered the leading players on both teams. At the Met, the Chicago Seven face off against the Mission Council (photographed at the United States Embassy in Saigon), glaring from the opposite wall. A weaker artist would bend to his leanings—treat one side with fondness, the other with sarcastic ire. Yet, if we are urged to note every crease in Abbie Hoffman's corduroys, the same goes for the worn, well-ironed nap of the Army fatigues in which General Creighton W. Abrams meets the camera's gaze. It is the duty of that camera to record any remnants of the battles into which each man has thrown himself; neither of them—in common with Avedon's other targets—is allowed to rest in peace.

By the time these pictures were taken, in 1969 and 1971, respectively, Avedon had forfeited his Rolleiflex, a longtime companion, with its twin lenses, square film format, and waist-level finder. You peer down into a Rolleiflex, which is often more helpful than sticking a single-lens reflex in front of your face, but the machinery still blocks you off from your subjects—you still can't look *at* them, as you would at someone whom you wished to scare, or with whom you were poised to fall in love. So Avedon traded up to an eight-by-ten view camera, which he duly hauled around the United States and beyond. The negative is far larger on a view camera, and that means that each wrinkle and scar can be read like a back road on a map. More important, Avedon got to stand beside his instrument, and this gave him the liberty to confront his targets—to coax and calibrate, adjusting not the aperture (which is easy enough) but the emotional temperature of the encounter. That is his gift, the unlearnable thing. As he said to Truman Capote, in a phrase calculated to strike panic into all those who believe that a new Nikon, like a new set of golf clubs, will magically improve their game, "I hate cameras."

Avedon is a man at ease with the violence of sentiment; he can cry up the brushwork of a painter who has been dead for three centuries with the verve that others use to lay into their latest foes. Small wonder that his work, for all the calmative gleam of its finish, has been treated as provocation. For five years, starting in 1979, he went in quest of the portraits that would become "In the American West," and, here and there, the results were hauled up on a charge of condescension: how dare he make meticulous, city-boy art from these toiling souls—ranch hands, farmers, hoboes stained and weathered by migration? Now, twenty years or so on, the pictures have the timbre and heft of pure American tribute; how dare *we* presume that a pianist or an astronaut can be an icon of himself, that he deserves the chance to find on camera the character that most becomes him, but not a guy with seven dollars in his pocket? How can we accuse Avedon of looking down on these folk, when his lens looks them straight in the eye? And what eyes: some are so ice-bright,



Self-portrait, New York City, 2002.

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though shot under daylight alone, that you can feel the unfrightenable blueness burning through.

The Met show would not be Avedon if it did not close with a smack and sting of the new. There are teen-agers in this city who would kill for a taste of the hectic hipness that Avedon maintains as he nears his eightieth year; yet he would not be human if that year did not come wreathed in a certain sadness. Are there any poets still fine enough to be photographed? Can he hope to get himself arrested again in the immediate future? Shown here, for the first time, is a recent self-portrait: a triptych, like his Stravinsky of 1969, and, like all triptychs, glinting with the possibility of drama. The nothingness behind the figure was to be expected. Avedon long ago dispensed with backgrounds of civilizing halftones, let alone the clutter of props; he is a black-and-white photographer, with all the unsparing pencilled clarity that the job demands, not a gray-on-gray man. If there are doubts and fears, they arrive less by shade than by force of line; look at his hands in these shots, as they tuck themselves away, pick at something, then lock in a knuckly knot. Francis Bacon once pointed out the amazing boniness of a particular Degas pastel—how the top of the model's spine seemed almost to break through the tautened skin as she craned forward to dry her hair. We get that here, too, as we do in the prayerful handclasp of Bert Lahr, photographed in 1956, or in a shot of Bacon himself, fingers resting quizzically at the rim of his mouth. There is a shyness, in this latest sighting of Avedon, that we have not caught before—a modest caution, all the more surprising in that it comes at the climax of an exhibit devoted to nobody but him. Yet the message comes through, as it has since that Sicilian kid in 1947: our bodies tell tales for which most of us, even if we had the inclination, lack the voice. When we are young, those tales can be comedies or, if we are pretty enough, light verse; with the advent of middle age, you see us fending off farce. That is why Avedon is using this show to turn the other way, and to see how the story ends—to ask if all we are really good for, even the greatest among us, is the ghost of a smile. ♦

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE DOUBLE MAN

Why Auden is an indispensable poet of our time.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

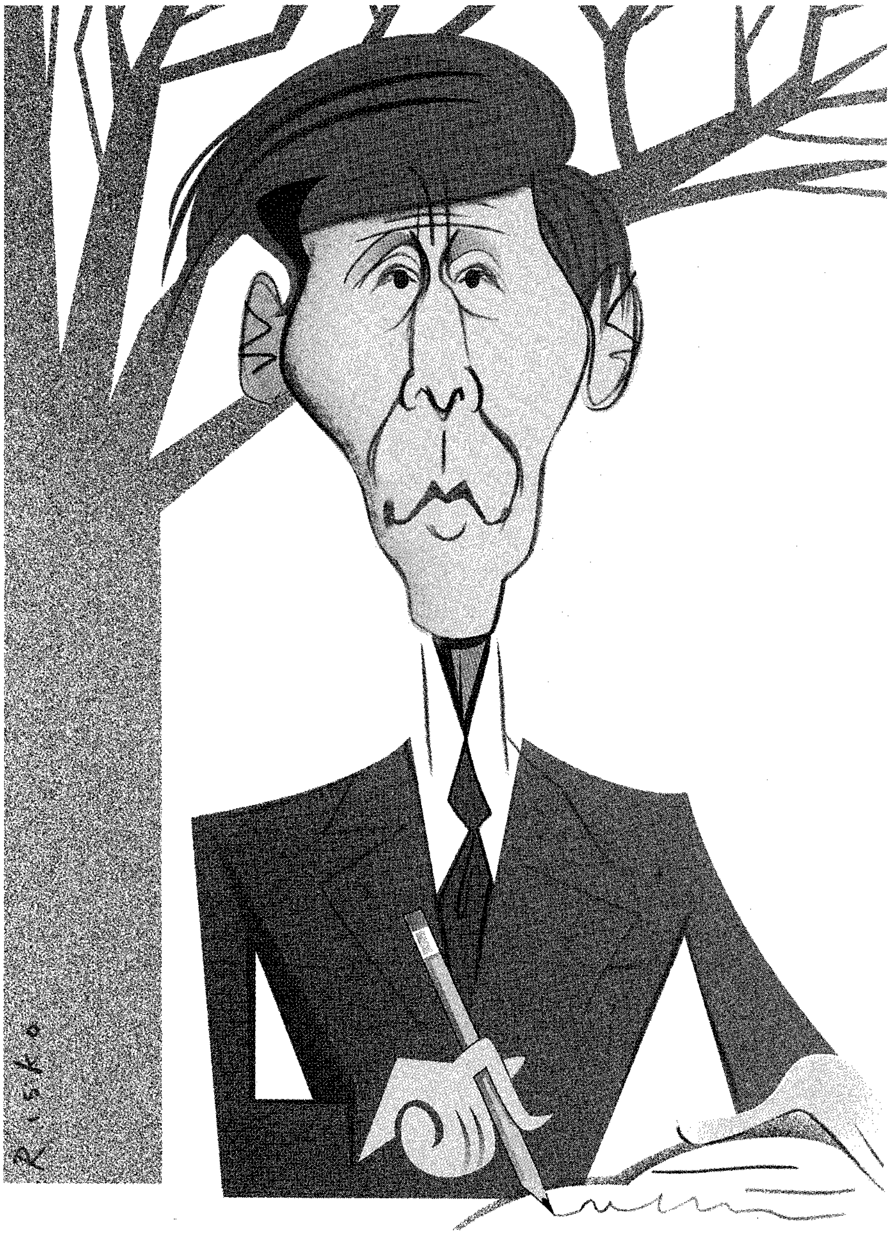
When W. H. Auden died, in 1973, no one would have imagined that thirty years later he would come back as the poet of another age, our own. He seemed miserable and seedy then, having made a failed return to Oxford after two decades on St. Marks Place in the East Village and become the model of a modern poet who had lost his way and got stranded on an island of his own pet phrases. The obituaries, though large, mostly quoted his lyrics from the thirties: "As I Walked Out One Evening" or "Lullaby" ("Lay your sleeping head, my love, / Human on my faithless arm . . .") or, more brazenly, the line from "September 1, 1939"—"We must love one another or die"—which he had pointedly cut from his own canon. The body of poetry that he produced after his emigration to America, in 1939, was pretty poorly regarded—Philip Larkin, once a disciple, had written a brisk, common-sense dismissal of it as "a rambling intellectual stew," while the greatest American reviewer, Randall Jarrell, another apostate, referred to the later Auden manner as one of a man "who has turned into a rhetoric mill grinding away at the bottom of Limbo."

Yet, at the beginning of the new century, he is an indispensable poet. Even people who don't read poems often turn to poetry at moments when it matters, and Auden matters now. In the eighties, his lyric "Stop All the Clocks" became the elegy of the AIDS era, sold on bookstore counters, by the registers. In the nineties, Robert Hughes led off his memorable polemic against postmodernism "The Culture of Complaint" with a long, marvelling quote from Auden's Christmas oratorio, "For the Time Being," where the liberal King Herod mourns the loss of rational consensus in the face of feckless sectarianism. In the past year, Auden has been everywhere, by the sheer force of popular will. Two of his lyrics about suffering and confusion—"Musée des Beaux Arts" and "September 1, 1939"—sprang to renewed life after last September 11th as the embodiments of our mood, posted on Web sites and subway walls. Even fashion models, and not just fashion models, now name their sons Auden, as they might ten years ago have called them Dylan, and pose with them on the cover of *Vogue*.

The odd thing is that Auden's poems are often saying the reverse of what we have now decided to hear. "Stop All the Clocks" was written as a jaunty, Noël Coward-like ironic pastiche of a mourning song, unmoored from grief—no more meant to be taken seriously as an elegy ("Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone"?) than "You're the Top" is to be taken seriously as a love poem. The quote from "For the Time Being" that Hughes used so effectively to warn against the mess the world can become in the absence of rationality was first meant to demonstrate the opposite—the rational voice, after all, is Herod's as he orders the massacre of the innocents. And "September 1, 1939," far from being a call to renewed conscience after a period of drift, is actually a call to irony and apolitical retreat, a call not to answer any call.

But, past a certain point, poets can't be misread, not by an entire time, no more than an entire family can misread a father: the homecoming noises in the hallway are the man; the accumulated impression is the poet. What matters is the sound he makes. Auden's emotional tone is our tone, even if his meanings are not always our meanings.

That Auden tone, the one that matters most now, was made in New York between 1939 and 1948, when Auden came to this city and made it his home. In those nine years, he underwent an extraordinary transformation, which implicated every line on his face. He entered as the smooth-faced mysterious druid of the English industrial landscape, the Marxist lyricist who spellbound a generation, and he emerged as the boozy, creased, garrulous Auden who lasted. He taught, loved, wrote more journalism than seems quite possible, and produced the four long poems that remain the astounding heart of his work: "For the Time Being," a Nativity oratorio in modern dress; "New Year Letter," an abstract philosophical poem in Swiftian couplets; "The Age of Anxiety," a pastoral eclogue set in a New York bar and written in alliterative verse; and "The Sea and the Mirror," a commentary on Shakespeare's "The Tempest." At last, we have a big book in which we can step into the quarry of the ideas, good and bad, from which he mined those four poems, and that is the second volume of Princeton's complete edition of Auden's prose, edited by Edward Mendelson and called, simply, "Prose: Volume II, 1939-1948" ($45).

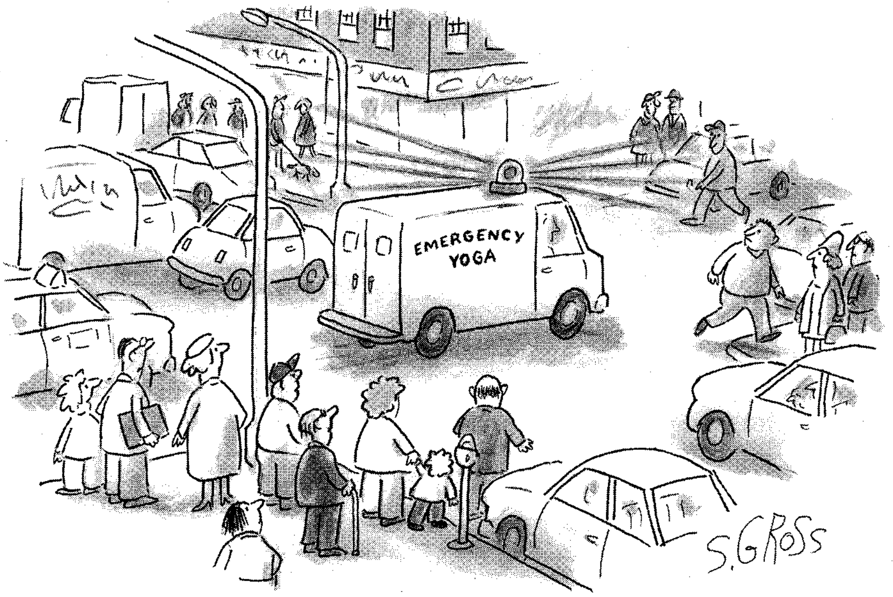


The tone that matters most now was made in New York between 1939 and 1948.

ROBERT RISKO

The essays are overwhelming in the number and variety of the subjects addressed, ideas aired, capital letters employed, and systems invented to prove a small point. When one recalls that they are merely the garden wall on which the ivy of the decade's poems grew, and that not even the whole wall is there—for instance, the recently collected lectures on Shakespeare and the long lecture series of 1948 on the imagery of the sea in Romantic poetry, "The Enchafèd Flood," are not included—they seem as lasting a monument to poetic energy allied to intellectual purpose as we possess. The essays are also a reminder of how many more places a poet could work out his worries in public fifty years ago. There are the now impossible to imagine short essays for *Mademoiselle* and *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue;* there are medium-length, middlebrow essays in the *Times Book Review;* there are long, chewy pieces for small magazines. There are lots of brief reviews for *The Nation*, and there are fine original essays on Tennyson and Kipling in particular, but for the most part these are review-essays. The reviewer is given a book on a subject—Baudelaire, Tennyson—by the editor, and gives back an essay not just, in the time-honored manner, on what the author should have thought about the subject, had he been as wise as the reviewer, but on what the subject should have thought about his own experience, had he understood it as well as the poet does. Not only is the biographer told what he should have thought about Tennyson and the Victorian age; Tennyson is told what he should have thought about the Queen.

Auden's mannerisms can be exhausting. Everything has to be explained in typologies, and usually in those capital letters. There are two eternal classes of men, six kinds of erotic love, four kinds of epic heroes. "As a European, Baudelaire inherited three main concepts of the human individual, two of them Greek and one Jewish," we read, and we feel for Baudelaire: what if he had wanted other ones, Armenian or merely French? Some of this is a mistaken, donnish idea of playfulness—Auden's whimsy was second nature to him, while the camp manner he learned in New York (calling the Almighty "Miss God") was willed—but far more of it is a sign of a constant need to bring order to the disorderly. And, even among the absurdities, sentences and ideas sparkle. "For a complete life a man requires six kinds of love," the reader is told, and he sighs and starts to count his fingers with his chin. "For his wife, for his children, for his friends, for his neighbors, for his work, and for God." But then this leads to: "In our time, the secularization of belief . . . the atomization of society . . . tend to deprive him of all but the first. If the average man today is obsessed with sex, it is partly because it seems to him the only sphere in which he is a free agent, in which his failures and his triumphs are really his; hence if he fails here, he has achieved nothing with his life." Philip Roth's



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early heroes couldn't have put it better.

There are so many subjects, and so many typologies, that it is surprising to see how reliably, in the end, Auden returns to a single theme: the reconciliation of the Christian idea that salvation depends on indiscriminate universal love, exploding categories and communities, with the classical idea that only small circles of friends and lovers can console us for the world's evil. All the essays (and poems, too) might be gathered under a single heading: How to Love All Mankind, While Politely Keeping It Out of Your Garden.

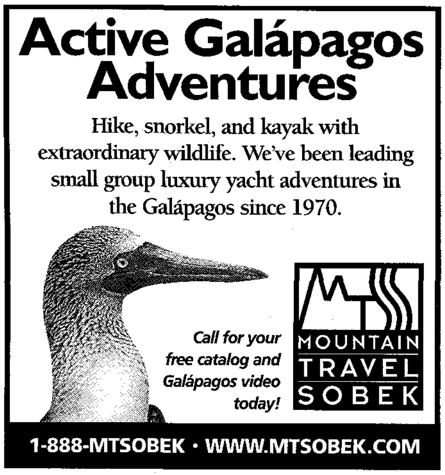
Auden and Christopher Isherwood had come to New York together in 1939—before the war began, but when it was obvious that it was on its way. This was widely seen in England as a betrayal. Evelyn Waugh invented a pair of hypocritical left-wing poets in his war trilogy only to get at Auden and Isherwood. (This was unfair. When the war began, Auden tried to be useful.) In 1939, Auden held a position that can only just be suggested by that of Bob Dylan in 1967: indisputably the voice of his generation, he also wrote in a style so cryptic and allusive that the generation puzzled over what exactly it was that they were supposed to be saying. Something about war and doubt and sex and mining machinery . . .

Arriving in New York, Auden changed, and quickly. He found that it was possible to make a real living, if not by writing poetry then by being a poet. More important, he fell in love with two young Jewish men, Jesus of Nazareth and Chester Kallman of Brooklyn, and wanted to make the two loves one. His return to Christianity began with memories of his mother's Catholic piety, and was pushed forward by his experiences in Spain—where, as he explained, though a passionate Republican, he had been more shocked than he could have imagined by seeing all the churches in Barcelona closed.

Many poets had turned Christian in the preceding decades, of course; the example of Eliot was there before him. But Auden's Christianity was nearly the direct reverse of Eliot's. Where Eliot had looked to religion for order, authority, and tradition, Auden saw in it a radical levelling principle that eliminated hierarchies and distinctions between people—smart and stupid, even good and bad—and left them all sinners in a single boat. He wrote:

> The Catholic faith [i.e., the ideal Christian faith], while it condemns no temperament as incapable of salvation, flatters none as being less in peril than any other. In the same way [a Christian] has to make his public confession of belief in a church which is not confined to his sort, to those with whom by nature he feels at home, for in it there is neither Jew nor German, East nor West, boy nor girl, smart nor dumb, boss nor worker, Bohemian nor bourgeois, no elite of any kind; indeed there are not even Christians there, for Christianity is a way, not a state, and a Christian is never something one is, only something one can pray to become.

Auden understood, with a clarity enforced by distance—he saw the shapes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the blood was making, where up close one saw only the spill—that Europe's murderousness took a logical form. What had happened was not an outbreak of barbarism but the consequence of modern ideas, particularly the idea that the world could be made perfect by eliminating imperfections (the Jews, the bourgeoisie).

His Christianity offered, in contrast, no lost age of authority but a series of visionary moments—those Blakean moments when we intimate an order and numinousness in the universe which implies a divine order. (Edmund Wilson dismissed Auden's faith, not entirely unfairly, as "the mythology and animism of childhood.") Again and again, his "vision" is one of remembered grace. "We are always entering paradise but only for a moment," he wrote. And when he invokes Jesus he does so in the language of the nursery rhyme and the fairy tale. In "New Year Letter," concluding his own Christian hymn, he writes:

> O Unicorn among the cedars,
> To whom no magic charm can lead us,
> White childhood moving like a sigh
> Through the green woods unharmed in thy
> Sophisticated innocence.

But this longing for the numinous was offset or at least complicated by the sex he got and the friends he made in those years. In early 1939, he fell in love with Kallman, a young and, apparently, very beautiful poet, the son of a Brooklyn dentist, and the early idyllic stretches of their affair inspired the most beautiful of modern love poems: "Warm are the still and lucky miles, / White shores of longing stretch away." Kallman was bright and warm and lucky, though not at all still, which turned out to be a problem. He was "out" in a way that Auden had never encountered before in someone he saw as a peer—with no self-doubt or even ironic self-inquiry about his sexual tastes. (Isherwood and Auden were out, too, but their outness consisted of remaining conspiratorially in, on the English principle that nothing is sexier than a secret society.) In two years, Auden went from the furtive English schoolboy's "buggerdom" to the bel-canto opera and camp of Greenwich Village and Fire Island. He and Kallman ended up in drag out on the Island, with Auden dressed up as a cardinal—a Firbank cardinal, but a cardinal.

Surrounded by other émigrés, Auden, who until that time had been very English, became in New York a European. This island unislanded him. His poems to Voltaire, Henry James, and Freud all date from his first two years in New York. (At the same time, he became much less "modern," leaving behind his earlier taste for cinema, pop music, "new styles of architecture," Pylons, and Bauhaus glass.) Fire Island, the New School, plenty of money from *Vogue*, and love with a dentist's son: to an Englishman abroad, it must have seemed like Paradise.

He was conscious in the forties that the world was as evil as it would ever be, but conscious, too, that he felt as happy as he would ever feel. At one point, he had to have several teeth removed, and he claimed to have had a dream while under the anesthetic. "It's the second time I've had it," he said afterward. "It's all about Chester and salvation. Now I know I can't be damned. The margin of salvation is ever so slight . . . but it's there." Chester and salvation were his theme, and they light from below the essays from the forties. He was too intelligent to confuse the two; but he was too much in love with both not to think that there must be a family relation. This gave his Christianity a curiously worldly cast. Most Christian mystic-poets, from Dante to George Herbert, have accepted unworldliness as at least a poetic premise, or pose: our community of believers in here, your bad world out there. But Auden didn't want to do that, because he didn't feel that way about it. The traditional Christian said fuck the world and love thy neighbor; Auden said love the world and fuck thy neighbor, a related but a distinct thought.

There is in this position, though, a catch, and a rather big one. Catholicism is inclusive; Fire Island is exclusive. All religious circles are open; all circles of friends are closed. Auden tried, conscientiously, to square this circle many times, and the most strenuous ideas in the essays largely involve that effort. The first and easiest way to do it was the way it's usually done: by insisting that erotic and selfish love provided a glimpse of ideal love—"eros" became "agape." His love for Kallman made him upgrade this vi-

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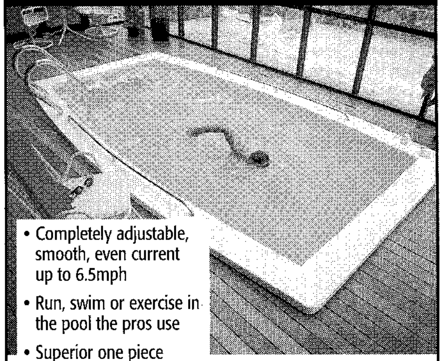

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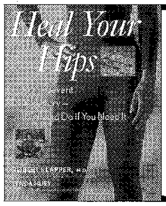

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sion into the more comforting bourgeois notion that erotic love produces married love, which produces community. But soon this view came to seem complacent—and the beloved object proved unfaithful—and so it was replaced with a more romantic view. Erotic love might exist only on its own terms, rather than as a step toward ideal domesticity, but it was still possible, he believed, only within a Christian context, even if it was a Christian heresy. Which was better than nothing, but a heresy it remained, however you gnawed at it.

Perhaps, then, it was not the ideal lover, who in any case strayed, but the ideal community in which he strayed—what if that world, however absurd, was the real community of saints in, so to speak, drag? He played with that idea for a bit, but gave it up as too exclusive, and too conceited. What if, instead, the connection lay in the body itself, in sex; what if the human body was God's metaphor and its experiences the map of God's will? The English poet Charles Williams explored this idea, and Auden seized on it almost before the ink was dry on Williams's poems. But that led right back to the first idea, that sex was God's way of making us religious, which seemed dubious enough . . . On and on the poet searches for a metaphor broad enough to contain his truth, wise enough to convince anyone else that it is one. (Mendelson, in his "Later Auden," teases out the life and death of these attempts with great sympathy.)

The truth was that the two terms could never be reconciled in argument. They could only be dramatized in poetry. And what finally strikes the reader of Auden's essays is how often what is exasperation in his prose becomes eloquent in his poetry: a tension between community—expressed in the idioms of cosmopolitan, urban charm—and ideal love, expressed in the abstract language of theology. The dramatization is the essential situation that recurs in each of his poems: a small group of friends or pickups clinging to each other for comfort, booze, sex, and understanding, holding theological conversations in the eye of a storm, and glimpsing in childhood a better condition, which they recognize as a paradoxical hope—we can't get back, we can. They can be the men on the street of "The Age of Anxiety," or the group invoked in "New Year Letter." In "For the Time Being," the most successful of these poems, they are at once participants in the Nativity story and drunken New Yorkers.

Above all, the tension is made beautiful in the poems by the play between the virtuoso glee of the comic versification and the serious religious and political ideas. In "New Year Letter," for instance, the Swiftian couplets with their reasonable good-humored rhythm play constantly against the frank Goya-like catalogue of the war's horrors:

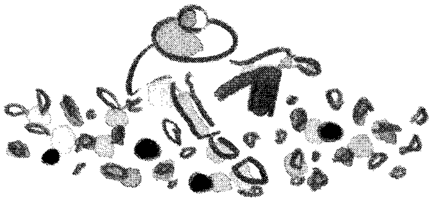
> Who, thinking of the last ten years,
> Does not hear howling in his ears
> The Asiatic cry of pain,
> The shots of executing Spain,
> See stumbling through his outraged mind
> The Abyssinian, blistered, blind,
> The dazed uncomprehending stare
> Of the Danubian despair,
> The Jew wrecked in the German cell,
> Flat Poland frozen into hell.

The effect of this fugue of sad speech and formal meter is not Brechtian irony but Augustan lucidity: the troubles of a time made momentarily lighter by being seen clear.

In the forties, Auden became a new kind of liberal. No one saw better the limits of liberalism, but what drew him to liberalism was exactly that he could see its limits. His liberalism was tied to his Christianity through its pessimism—about the perfectibility of man and the possibilities of happiness. "Man is not, as the romantics imagined, good by nature," he wrote. "Men are equal not in their capacities and virtues but in their natural bias toward evil. No individual or class, therefore, however superior . . . can claim an absolute right to impose its view of the good upon them. Government must be democratic, the people must have a right to make their own mistakes, and to suffer for them." In an uncanny moment of intellectual parallelism, in 1940 he wrote an essay, "Criticism in a Mass Society," that anticipates Karl Popper's soon to be written "The Open Society and Its Enemies," and uses the same descriptive vocabulary. "There are two types of society: closed societies and open," Auden writes. "When we use the word democracy we do not or should not mean any particular form of political structure; such matters are secondary. What we mean or ought to mean is the completely open society." (The vocabulary seems to derive in both cases from the philosopher Henri Bergson, who uses it, however, in a far more metaphysical way.) Auden shared Popper's sense that open societies were built on skeptical faith rather than on fatuous confidence. "We may not know very much, but we do know *something*," he maintained, "and while we must always be prepared to change our minds, we must act as best we can in the light of what we do know."

Auden, in a pregnant fragment, even glimpsed what may be the only rational theory of art in an open society: art, he writes, "is one of the most powerful means of transforming closed communities into open ones, in moving people from passion to desire." Instead of inflaming a passion, an incoherent and irrational want, the artist disciplines it to a desire, something exact. He takes a feeling and makes it into a thought—or, at least, a thought-through feeling. This is high-sounding, but it is plain truth. Why were so many, after 9/11, drawn to Auden's poems save that reading them helped us to make the overwhelming passions of the time—fear, rage—into specific desires: to have a voice, to affirm a truth, to speak to a friend, to love more wisely. "For art had set in order sense / And feeling and intelligence, /And from its ideal order grew/Our local understanding too."

His belief in this larger end for poetry, many people have supposed, led him to pontifical gesturing. This was the accusation that both Jarrell and Larkin levelled at him—that he had become in America a merely rhetorical poet, in love with the sound of his own hobbyhorses and abstractions. "An Elks' Convention of the Capital Letters" was how Jarrell dismissed Auden's ideas, which ended, he said, in "a vague humanitarian mysticism." There's something in this—Auden is abstract, and he can be vague. But the abstractions add up. Auden isn't rhetorical, just intellectual. The rhetorical imagination tries to replace real things with abstract categories. The intellectual poet tries to connect individual cases into a common class. Rhetoric attaches great emotion to what turns out to be, in the end, only a name. Intellect gives names to real emotions. When Auden talks, say, about the "Age of Anxiety," he is giving a common feeling a proper name.



The parallel, if slightly contradictory, accusation, produced by Auden's assertions that poetry "makes nothing happen," was that, by insisting on poetry as a game, he reduced it to a plaything. But Auden didn't believe that art was worthless. He believed that it was useless, a very different thing. It didn't save lives or change elections. What it did was be poetry—it offered an alternative to the insistences, the mechanized passions, of mass society. This may be why poets such as Joseph Brodsky worshipped him, while poets like Jarrell and Larkin, so close in other ways, became apostates. Auden, the Eastern Europeans saw, wrote about big public subjects but in a voice that undermined ideologies. Larkin and Jarrell, after all, never had to worry about rhetoric; Auden was the most rhetorical figure they knew. The Eastern Europeans knew what real empty rhetoric sounded like; they had heard it every day of their lives. They recognized Auden as something better than a rhetorical poet. They recognized him as a public poet.

Auden squared his circles the only way New Yorkers can, which is by living in squares and talking in circles. Few writers have ever managed to inhabit so many levels of life. Being everywhere at once while going nowhere in particular is what poets do, and Auden did it. Where journalists write about what people are arguing about in public, and novelists about what they are talking about in private, only poets seem able to show that what people argue about in public is identical to what they talk about in private, that what we are arguing about is the sum of our own guilts, fears, anxieties, hopes. And only a handful of poets show that what people are talking about in public and what they are talking about in private is always a variant of what they say to themselves when they are alone, and that, Auden knew, is simply "I wish I were not." If he sometimes sounds in the forties as if he were speaking to us from a very high soapbox in a very big square, well, listen: we can hear him, still. ♦

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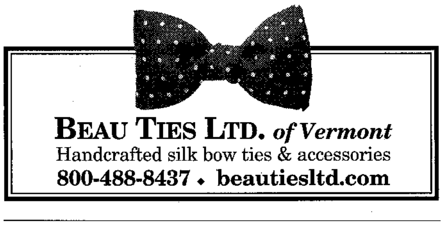

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Speer: The Final Verdict, *by Joachim Fest, translated from the German by Ewald Osers and Alexandra Dring (Harcourt; $30).* Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and armaments minister, was the most enigmatic member of the Nazi élite. He was avowedly nonpolitical, and contemptuous of what he saw as the vulgarity of the Führer's inner circle. Yet he also worked assiduously to realize Hitler's wildest visions while willfully ignoring the devastating consequences of his ideology. In this mesmerizing biography, Fest, a leading German historian, unpacks these contradictions, presenting a Speer who was "a man of many abilities, but of no qualities." Speer's ambition made him willing to sacrifice principle for power. His disdain for politics made him skeptical of democracy and tolerant of dictatorship. Most important, he elevated expertise above everything else, caring less about what was done than about whether it was done well. Fest sees his subject as emblematic rather than anomalous: in understanding how Speer embraced Hitler so "unreservedly and unthinkingly," we understand how Germany could have as well.

The Book of Illusions, *by Paul Auster (Holt; $24).* Auster, a master of narrative sleight-of-hand and cerebral formalism, has now turned to the theme of disappearance. David Zimmer, a professor of comparative literature, loses his wife and two children in a plane crash; he is considering suicide when he sees a silent-film clip that makes him laugh. He learns that the film's director, Hector Mann, inexplicably went missing in 1929, and when Zimmer writes an academic study of Mann's lost work he is drawn into a pleasingly noirish sequence of events (involving shots of tequila, a pearl-handled gun, and an attractive woman with a distinctive birthmark) that lead him to the dying director, in New Mexico. By the book's end, Mann's disappearance has become a springboard for Zimmer's deepest questions about the burden of art. Most movingly, though, Auster's novel shows how swiftly the guy ropes of identity can be cut by a simple sentence: "A plane falls from the sky, and all the passengers are killed."

Three Junes, *by Julia Glass (Pantheon; $25).* This enormously accomplished début novel is a triptych that spans three summers, across a decade, in the disparate lives of the McLeod family. The widowed father, a newspaper publisher who maintains the family manse in Scotland, is chary, dogged, and deceptively mild. Fenno, the eldest son, runs an upscale bookshop in the West Village, and his most intimate relationship—aside from almost anonymous grapplings with a career house-sitter named Tony—is with a parrot called Felicity. One of Fenno's younger brothers is a Paris chef whose wife turns out pretty daughters like so many brioches; the other is a veterinarian whose wife wants Fenno to help them have a baby. Glass is interested in how risky love is for some people, and she writes so well that what might seem like farce is rich, absorbing, and full of life.

Porno, *by Irvine Welsh (Norton; $24.95).* In a wily "Big Chill" maneuver, Welsh brings back the cast of his iconic first novel, "Trainspotting," for a serially narrated Edinburgh reunion, but, though ten years have passed, none of these seedy characters have grown up at all. When pimping and pub proprietorship become a bore, Sick Boy and Renton turn their energies to the production of a porn film entitled "Seven Rides for Seven Brothers," in which they and their nearest and dearest play starring roles. Brawling, bonking, and Scots brogue aside, there's room for some solid satire—of gentrification, globalization, and the hypocrisy of Britain's Labour Government. Surprisingly, the book's most convincing voice is that of its only female narrator, an ambitious Sick Girl, who takes on each man and somehow comes out a winner.

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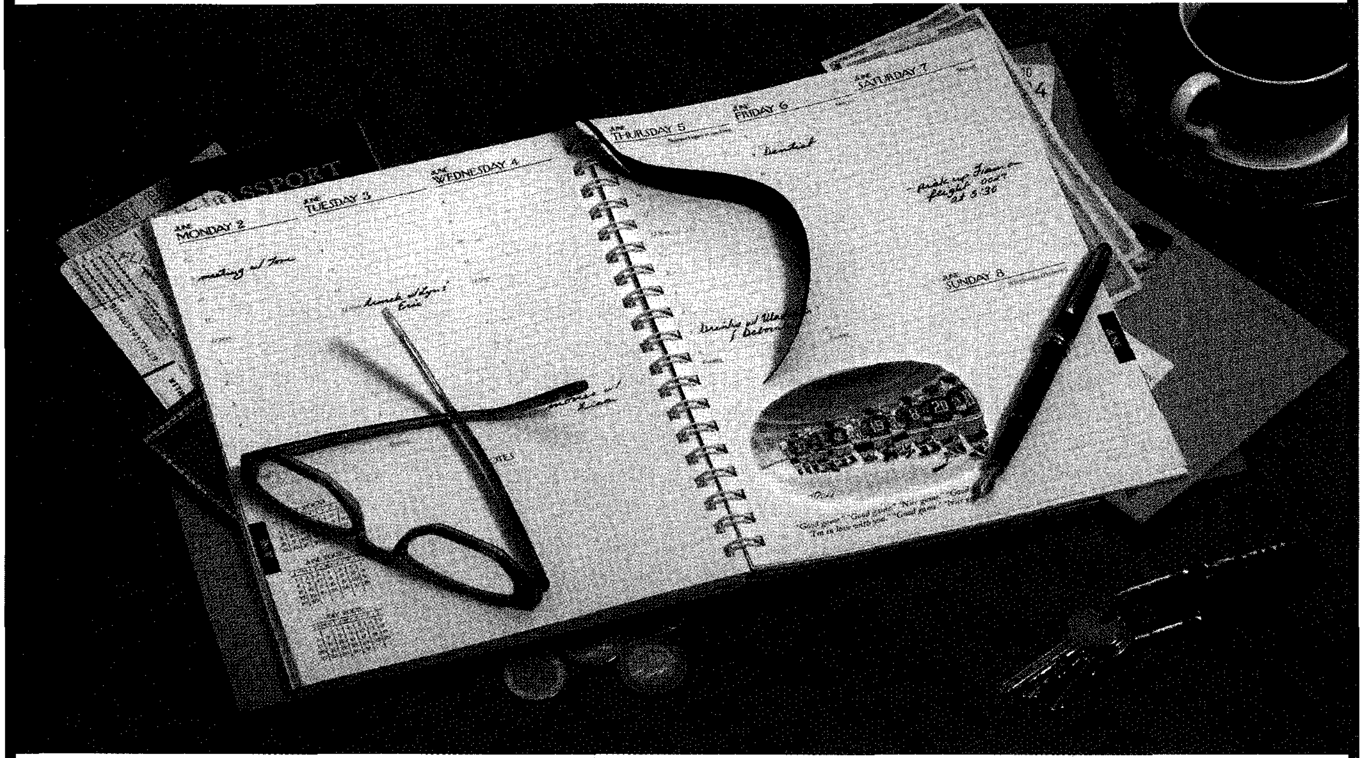

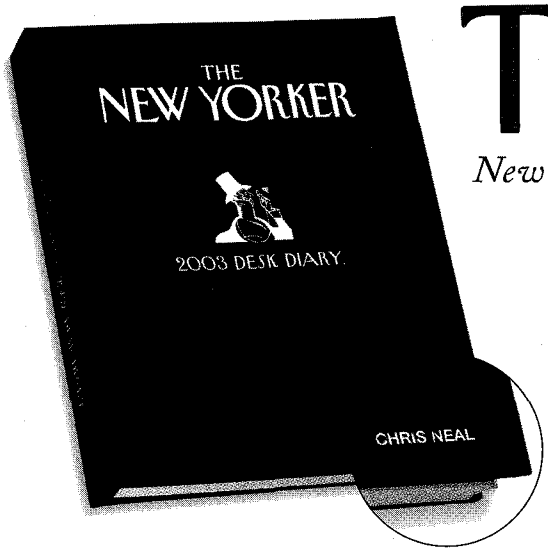

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THE THEATRE

TALKING TERROR

Tom Stoppard on the revolutionary road.

BY JOHN LAHR

“When in doubt, speculate. Enter the picture,” Tom Stoppard has said. In his ambitious trilogy about pre-revolutionary intellectual life in Russia, “The Coast of Utopia” (at London’s Royal National Theatre), which requires thirty actors, two hundred and seventy-one costumes, and more than nine hours, Stoppard has imagined himself into the sect of renegade mid-nineteenth-century thinkers for whom the word “intelligentsia” was coined, and whose heady debates about their homeland’s moral, intellectual, and political vacuum sowed the seeds of revolution both in the Russian Empire and far beyond its borders. His saga is battened primarily to four major figures: the essayist Alexander Herzen (1812-70), whom Sir Isaiah Berlin called “a kind of Russian Voltaire,” the equal of Marx and Tocqueville as a social observer but as a moralist “more interesting and original than either”; the novelist Ivan Turgenev (1818-83); the literary critic and Savonarola of his generation Vissarion Belinsky (1811-48); and the agitator Mikhail Bakunin (1814-76). From their lives and ideas, Stoppard, whose plays were at one time banned in the Soviet Union, manufactures an epic whose greatest achievement is to show history as irony on the move.

“The Coast of Utopia” takes on the renegade Russian thinkers for whom the word “intelligentsia” was coined.

TOM BACHTELL

“With fearless step we march to the very limit, and go beyond it; never out of step with the dialectic, only with the truth,” wrote Herzen, who saw the oppression of the tsarist state as the problem and a democratic revolution as the solution. “We have to open men’s eyes and not tear them out,” he explains in the play. Inevitably, Stoppard is drawn to the amiable Herzen, who shares with him a certain intellectual gaiety, a gentleness, and the ability to turn ambivalence into artful expression, if not always effective action. Although Herzen (the poised, excellent Stephen Dillane) does not appear until the second part of the first play in the trilogy, “Voyage,” his story and his gnarly inquiry into social change form the core of “The Coast of Utopia.” “Voyage,” which is the most fragmented of the three plays, dramatizes the infection of German Romantic idealism among the Russian upper classes of the eighteen-thirties. (Russia’s censorship of political expression gave new ideas the status of holy dogma but also encouraged an absolutist frame of mind—which in the end proved equally disastrous.) The women acted it out in romance, the men in revolution. “Shipwreck,” the second and most successful play, embraces exile, the growth of Russian social criticism between 1846 and 1852, and the revolutionaries’ disappointment at the failure of the Paris Revolt of 1848, along with the death of Herzen’s wife and son and his subsequent move to England. Stoppard is at his best when lampooning the cultural division between the Slavophiles and the Westernizers. “Go to France for your cravats if you must, but why do you have to go to France for your ideas?” one Slavophile says. To which Turgenev (the lanky, droll Guy Henry) replies, “Because they’re in French. You can publish anything you like in France, extraordinary.” The third play, “Salvage,” deals with the rise and fall of Herzen’s newspaper, *The Bell*, the first significant Russian publication to lob revolutionary ideas into the motherland, and with the reaction of the new generation of revolutionaries, who believe in progress through the application of scientific principles, to the “men of the forties.” (Despite Stoppard’s claim to the contrary, the plays, to my mind, need to be seen in historical sequence.)

Scratch a rebel and you’ll find money from home. Except for the provincial Belinsky (superbly played by Will Keen), who has to earn his crust by writing literary reviews, the revolutionaries in Stoppard’s tale are men of inherited means—the “repentant gentry,” as Turgenev piquantly puts it—who are all too aware that what's good for the pike is death to the minnow. "Guilt was the psychological inspiration of the revolution," Orlando Figes writes in his masterly history "A People's Tragedy." In the best scene in "Voyage," Herzen sits at an ice rink in 1834, watching festive skaters and fulminating to a university friend, the philosopher Nicholas Stankevich (Raymond Coulthard), about the disparity between the frivolous surface of Moscow life and its barbarous reality. "The Kritski brothers disappeared for insulting the Tsar's portrait," he says. "Antonovich and his friends for forming a secret society, meaning they met in somebody's room to read a pamphlet you can buy on the street in Paris. Young men and women are pairing off like swans on the skating ground. There is something wrong with this picture."

What's wrong with Stoppard's stage picture is that the drama is in the wings; what's onstage is just talk. Stankevich uses Hegelian categories to detach himself from the horror that Herzen denounces. "Reform can't come from above or below, only from within," he says. "The material world is nothing but the shadow on the wall of the cave." Perhaps because Stoppard's interest lies in the history of ideas and not in social history, Trevor Nunn's production adopts a similar strategy. Its hubbub—a revolving stage; the shifting panels of a cyclorama onto which William Dudley's sumptuous video locations are projected; the ballroom gavottes and the revolutionary hoopla—camouflages the stasis at the core of the play. The arbitrary brutality of the governing classes, state censorship, the pettifogging bureaucracy, the corrupt clergy—all the stifling ingredients of Russian life that created the climate for revolution—are alluded to in "The Coast of Utopia," but they are not fleshed out. The serfs, who made up a third of the empire, are conveyed here as a handful of ragged, spectral presences with dirty clothes and clean fingernails, and the violence meted out to them is only notionally acknowledged. (A serf is struck by Bakunin's mother and runs away crying. In real life, by contrast, Turgenev's grandmother hit a young serf and then, irritated by his outcry, smothered him to death.)

Sometime around 1995, according to his biographer Ira Nadel, Stoppard was entering the London Library with an armful of books when he bumped into the theatre critic Michael Billington. "Just returning my new play," Stoppard quipped. In "The Coast of Utopia," he has put his reading into his art, but not enough art into his reading. The pageant of philosophical fervor certainly suits his reflective temperament. "I'm the kind of person who embarks on an endless leapfrog down the great moral issues," he said in a 1972 interview. "I put a position, rebut it, refute the rebuttal and rebut the refutation. Forever." But here, ironically, with so many "isms" being bandied about—"Hegelianism," "Slavism," "populism," "obscurantism," "dialectical materialism"—the only "ism" missing is dynamism. Stoppard makes the ideological disputes cogent, but his glib narrative shorthand lends itself to synthesis, not to psychology. As a result, the ideas are given life, but the characters are not. The trilogy is like an unfinished portrait, the head rich in detail and the heart merely a wash of color. You don't know enough for the human drama to be compelling, and the plot begs more questions than it answers.

Nonetheless, no time in Stoppard's company is ever wasted. In giving us news of Herzen, who believed in both radical action and the limits of terror, he brings back into our dangerous world an articulate cautionary voice. "Life's bounty is in its flow," Herzen says. "Where is the song when it's been sung? The dance when it's been danced? It's only we humans who want to own the future, too." Stoppard's discourse, it seems, is meant to free us from the spell of abstract nouns, which Herzen called "the syphilis of our revolutionary passions," and which rationalize the violent solution as a historical necessity. "There is no libretto," Herzen reminds us. "We need wit and courage to make our way while our way is making us." The trilogy's brilliant final monologue—Herzen's answer to the absolutes of his day and ours—alone is worth the price of admission:

> The destroyers wear nihilism like a cockade—they think they destroy because they are radicals. But they destroy because they're disappointed conservatives—let down by the ancient dream of a perfect society of squarable circles, where conflict is cancelled out. But there is no such place, that's why it's called utopia. Until we stop killing our way towards it, we won't be grown up as human beings. Our meaning doesn't depend on us transcending the imperfect reality we've got. How we live it is our meaning, in our time. We have no other. ♦

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THE SKY LINE

SANCTUM ON THE COAST

Rafael Moneo's new cathedral in L.A. looms large.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

It is hard to make a landmark in Los Angeles. The city is relentlessly horizontal, and while you might think that a skyscraper would be memorable, it doesn't work that way in L.A. Big, boxy buildings stay in your line of vision longer, which is something that Rafael Moneo must have kept in mind when he was designing the new Our Lady of the Angels cathedral. It is one of the largest religious buildings constructed in the center of an American city in half a century, and one of the most ambitious. The cathedral will inevitably be compared with Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall, which is to be finished next year. They are both eye-grabbing structures designed by famous architects and they are just a couple of blocks away from each other in downtown Los Angeles. But the new cathedral has more in common with the familiar Los Angeles megabox. It's a big, horizontal mass, like the Beverly Center, the vast shopping mall built atop a parking structure; and the Pacific Design Center, a beached whale in blue glass; and the factorylike Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. I don't say this to be disrespectful. I think Moneo has tried to take a particular kind of Los Angeles building and make it into something spiritual, although it's not a natural leap. Gehry's swooping forms are more conventionally cathedral-like. If you asked a visitor which of the new buildings was the cathedral and which was the concert hall, he would probably get it wrong.

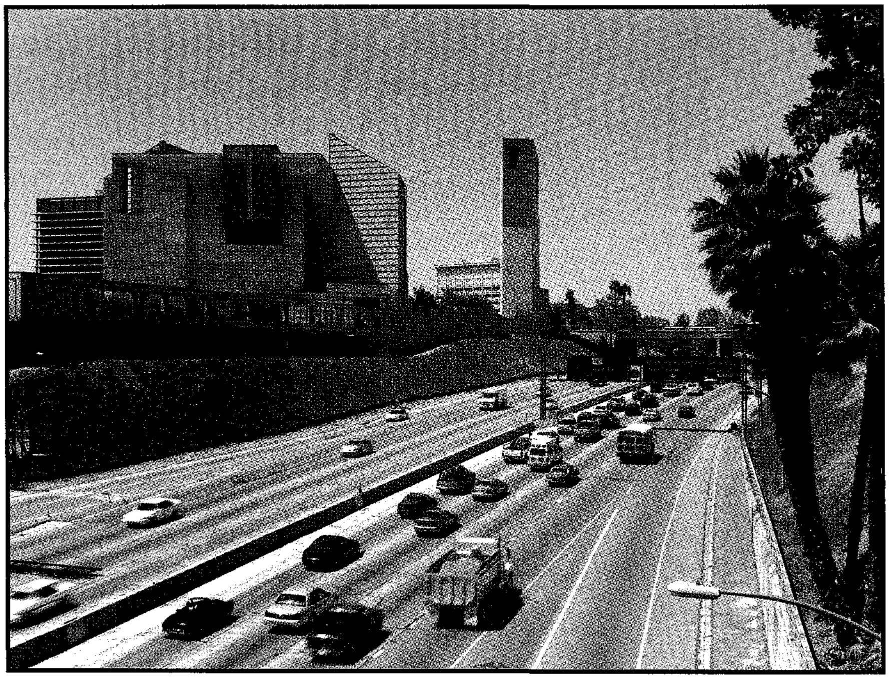
Moneo, a sixty-five-year-old architect who is based in Madrid but has spent much of his career in the United States, is a designer of exceptional thoughtfulness and precision. Even though he almost always works in masonry, his buildings have a certain delicacy. He isn't known for dazzling new forms, but he doesn't copy the past, either. He is a modernist who strives for timelessness, and he is most comfortable working within the vocabulary that he learned when he came of age in the nineteen-sixties and seventies: crisp, hard-edged, geometric. What distinguishes Moneo is his continual push to make this kind of architecture easier on the eye, and on the psyche. His work resembles, in a way, the style called brutalism, but in Moneo's hands it isn't harsh and cold. It's gentle brutalism.

The cathedral is a three-hundred-and-thirty-three-foot-long, ninety-five-foot-high origami of warm, adobe-colored concrete, which is right for a place whose first churches were Spanish missions. The shape recalls one of those performing-arts centers that were built on college campuses in the nineteen-sixties, or a suburban church, blown up to monumental scale and produced on an exquisitely refined level.

Is that enough for a cathedral? The concrete is quite beautiful, although it may have been a mistake to set concrete panels on some sections of the building in such a way that they look like gargantuan pieces of aluminum siding. And the subordinate structures, including the cardinal's residence and the parish offices, are clad in stucco and look like ordinary commercial buildings in the San Fernando Valley. If anything about the exterior stirs the emotions, it is a two-and-a-half-acre plaza, which manages to be a true public place. The plaza has a gift shop, a café with white market umbrellas and colorful Philippe Starck plastic chairs, and an escalator that goes down to the cathedral's pricey underground parking garage. At the far end of the plaza, a wall with glass panels overlooks the Hollywood Freeway, a quirky gesture that is rather endearing. Moneo likes to compare the freeway to a river, and, with the glass wall, he figured out a way to muffle its roar.

The plaza was filled with people when I was there, many of Hispanic descent (the city's eastern neighborhoods, near downtown, are heavily Hispanic), and they were doing the kinds of urban things people so rarely do in Los Angeles—like walking around. When the Getty Center, with its immense travertine piazza, opened a few years ago in Brentwood, the haute bourgeoisie of Los Angeles got a chance to be urban pedestrians, and the cathedral is giving others the same opportunity. It's the poor man's Getty, which is not an insignificant achievement.

The architecture gets better inside the cathedral. Moneo plays with the past and is genuinely inventive at the same time. His best touch is both an homage to the traditional Gothic cathedral and a subtle, brilliant inversion of it. He has laid out the cathedral in a fairly standard way—there is a cruciform-shaped nave in the center, flanked by long, enclosed ambulatories containing several small chapels. But he placed the façade at the same end of the building as the altar, which makes for an unusual entry sequence. You don't enter the building directly into the nave, as in a traditional cathedral. A pair of somewhat pompous bronze doors designed by the sculptor Robert Graham on the left side of the façade bring you into the south ambulatory, which is a long, sloping corridor that narrows slightly as you move forward, like diminishing perspective. The ambulatory is not an open arcade, as in a Gothic cathedral, and it is largely cut off from the nave by walls. As you walk along, you occasionally glimpse the nave to your right, and, while it is possible to turn and enter the larger space, you are encouraged to keep walking to the end, at which point you turn right and enter the nave from the far end of the cathedral, facing the altar—the spot in a conventional cathedral that you would have entered in the first place.



Our Lady of the Angels and the Hollywood Freeway. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

This is great processional architecture. The dramatic experience of moving through the building has been enhanced and extended, and when you finally enter the nave it is almost worth the buildup. Moneo has made a sumptuous modern space, angled and asymmetrical but calming. It is the same adobe color as the exterior, and there is soft, even light from huge alabaster windows. Crisply modern rooms with no right angles are rarely this serene. It is the light, which appears almost to waft over the concrete, that does it. Moneo rejected stained glass as too traditional, and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles rejected it as too expensive. An astonishing twenty-seven thousand square feet of Spanish alabaster was used, but, except for certain areas in which it provides a dramatic accent (as a backdrop for a huge concrete crucifix over the altar, for instance), it is invisible. There are some wrong moves: fussy hanging chandeliers that look a little too much like the glowing-globe fixtures that were popular in modern buildings in the nineteen-sixties, and a lot of earnest, dreary representational art. Moneo had hoped to commission pieces from distinguished abstractionists like Agnes Martin and Martin Puryear, but Cardinal Roger Mahony said he wanted art that his parishioners would easily understand.

I wonder if the Cardinal didn't sell his flock short. Still, you have to take Mahony seriously as a great patron. His predecessors had been trying to build a new cathedral for nearly a century, and he got the job done in less than eight years. The genesis of the project was the Northridge earthquake in 1994, which caused structural damage to the old cathedral, St. Vibiana's, a far too small Spanish-style church near a Latino shopping district deeper in the heart of downtown. The Cardinal wanted to build on the site of St. Vibiana's, but when preservationists took the archdiocese to court, he wasted no time acquiring the much bigger site, and then sold the old church to a developer, who is converting it into a performing-arts center. The new cathedral project cost something close to two hundred million dollars, most of which came from private sources, although that didn't stop a local alternative newspaper from calling it the Taj Mahony.

I didn't sense that the parishioners saw it that way. Indeed, they seemed to have a certain pride of ownership, which is remarkable, considering how different the cathedral is from what they are accustomed to. Moneo manages to stir up a substantial degree of emotion in a giant space, which isn't easy to do. Most big things built today are secular—convention centers, sports arenas, and the like. Few really large religious buildings have been constructed in this country in the last few years, and most of them have been fundamentalist churches in the South and the Midwest that, however meaningful they may be to their congregations, seem to me spiritually akin to shopping malls. Moneo says that the modern religious buildings he likes are small—Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp in eastern France, the even smaller Matisse chapel on the Côte d'Azur. In Los Angeles, he has made a valiant effort to render sacred space on a large scale, and he has done it without tricks or gimmicks. ♦

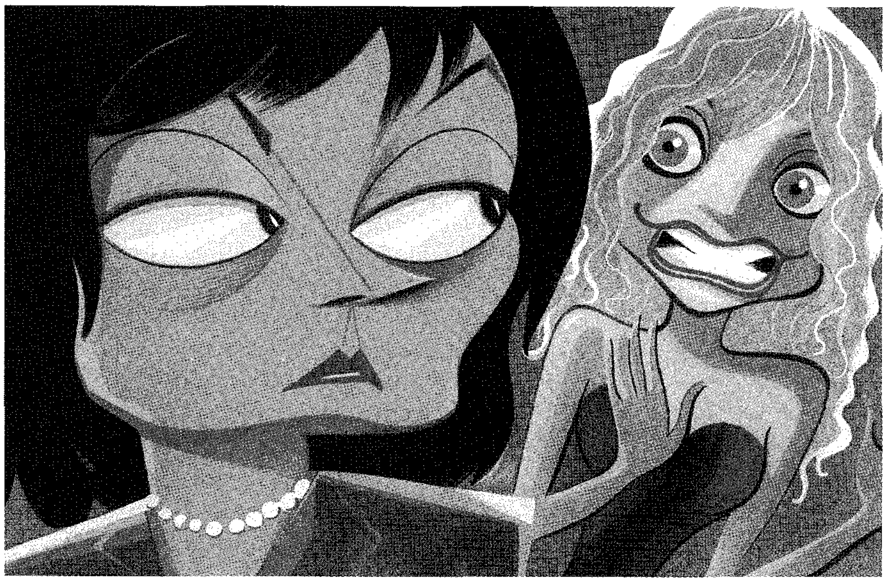
THE CURRENT CINEMA

GOOD-TIME GIRLS

"The Banger Sisters," "Secretary," and "My Big Fat Greek Wedding."

BY DAVID DENBY

If groupies followed film critics around from screening room to screening room, I suppose I might take a different view of their social value, but they don't, so right now I'll stand on my conscience and say that the premise of "The Banger Sisters"—that two women in middle age need to revive the spirit they had when they were rock groupies decades earlier—strikes me as, well, bananas. The negative rap on groupies wasn't that they had sex with lots of guys but that they were parasites whom no one wanted to see in the morning. Where was the cool part of it? "The Banger Sisters," a comedy written and directed by the screenwriter Bob Dolman, is almost as bizarrely askew in its desire to shock as the new, independently made "Secretary," in which a masochistic girl (Maggie Gyllenhaal) finds happiness working for a creepy lawyer (James Spader) who regularly whacks her on the fanny. "Secretary" is not meant to be realistic; it was shot by the director Steven Shainberg in a slow, dreamy neo-De Palma style and in candy colors, and Gyllenhaal has a Kewpie-doll silliness that almost makes the naughty parts of the movie fun. Still, the meaning of "Secretary" is that pain is liberation. This is not a comic idea but a pornographic idea, mixed with defiant anti-feminism: "If that's what makes you happy, you go, girl."



Susan Sarandon and Goldie Hawn as friends and former groupies.

ERIC PALMA

In "The Banger Sisters," Suzette (Goldie Hawn), fired from her job as a bartender on Sunset Strip, goes looking for her old friend and fellow party girl Vinnie (Susan Sarandon), who long ago shipped out to Phoenix. Vinnie married well; she now has a big garden, civic duties, and two teen-age daughters who know nothing of their mother's wild past. This primly evasive woman is a bum role for Sarandon, who constantly signals her distaste for the character, but Hawn does something fresh. She still has that puffy mouth, but it now seems hungry rather than babyish, and when her saucer eyes wander she's not flirting with the camera but checking out some guy for his sexual possibilities. Her Suzette has a dramatically enlarged chest and wears her pants very tight. At the age of fifty-five, Hawn makes a great-looking tramp, but she's doing more than taking a vanity trip. She digs deep into the role of a funny, lewd woman who has been too careless ever to put anything together for herself. As always, Hawn lets us in on her own pleasure, but this time there are touches of cynicism and regret. "The Banger Sisters" is painful to sit through, because you want to see someone like Paul Thomas Anderson take hold of the character and the actress and start again from the beginning. Bob Dolman understands Suzette, but the rest of the movie is composed of ham-handedly obvious scenes, followed by the inevitable Hollywood homilies about admitting who you are and being true to yourself. I'm not sure how any intelligent person can achieve a breakthrough by being true to her past as a groupie. Are these movies really stories about women's lives, or are they some sort of corkscrewed male fantasy?

None of my friends have seen "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," but all of my friends' mothers have seen it. The success of this low-budget independent movie, which has been playing since April 19th and has now grossed ninety-six million dollars, makes a startling film-business story but a rather dismaying artistic story. I say this as a critic who's all in favor of Hollywood making movies for my friends' mothers. But I have a feeling that the industry will draw the wrong lesson from the movie's success. The picture is an ethnic-American fairy tale; the way it got made is a fairy tale, too. A few years ago, the actress and producer Rita Wilson caught a one-woman show in Los Angeles—the Greek-American comedienne and actress Nia Vardalos talking about her crazy relatives and how hysterical they all got when she fell in love with a non-Greek and married him. Wilson took her husband, Tom Hanks, to see the act, and, with Hanks's support, a budget of five million dollars was assembled to make the film, with Vardalos herself as the ugly-duckling heroine and the television actor John Corbett as the swain. When the movie was finished, rather than junketing the press to New York and homogenizing the publicity, the producers and the stars sold the picture city by city. They figured out who the potential audience was, and went and found it. In time, word of mouth spread, and an older generation of moviegoers, who had largely been resigned to watching sitcoms at home, came out to see the picture.

The depressing part of the story is that "Wedding" is not all that different from a sitcom. The heroine, Toula, works as a "seating hostess" at her family's restaurant, in Chicago. Unmarried at thirty, she's considered a disgrace by her relatives, and she acts as if she agreed—her lank hair falls around her face, and she hides her body in a sackcloth dress. Her family loves her, but they approach her like the Furies, hounding her with lousy advice and overloaded plates of lamb and baklava. Each relative has a character tag: the father (Michael Constantine) is a self-pitying tyrant who's obsessed with all things Greek; the cousin is a taunting sexpot; and so on. There's a slightly destructive element in the family's love which Vardalos is aware of: they feed you, and they kill you. Innocently narcissistic, they are intimidated by modern America, and they try to make their children scared, too. When a handsome young Wasp named Ian Miller (Corbett) comes into the restaurant, and he and Toula begin dating, the family goes berserk.

It was when I got a load of Ian that my heart began to sink. Large, mild, and modest, Ian is a high-school English teacher acting out a gentle rebellion against his proper parents; that is, his hair hangs over his ears and he harbors vague New Age tendencies. The family's only possible objection to him is that he's not Greek, and that is what makes the movie a sitcom and not a romantic drama. Ian has no drive of his own, no attitudes, nary an idea. (Heaven forbid that anyone in an American movie should have an idea.) Nor does he have the slightest problem with Toula's family. But why does he love Toula so much? That's the mystery that even she doesn't understand. The story is a cross between "The Ugly Duckling" and "Cinderella," with a patsy prince for a hero. (The real prince in this affair is, of course, Tom Hanks.) As for Vardalos, she may be even more Greek than she realizes. The men in Toula's family are portrayed as pompous or infantile or both, and the women are the ones who actually run everything, while letting the men take the credit. It's no wonder the picture is a hit with my friends' mothers—the comic folk wisdom in "Wedding" flatters the hell out of them. But Vardalos, in her own way, repeats the syndrome that she's satirizing. She makes her lover so utterly pliable that, perhaps unconsciously, she puts him in his place.

The director, Joel Zwick, a TV guy, has a gentle touch: some of the behavior onscreen may be crass, but the movie itself isn't. Zwick doesn't shove the camera in people's faces. He's genuinely fond of this overwrought family, and he has some skilled farceurs on hand. Andrea Martin (from "SCTV"), who plays Toula's aunt, points her nose skyward and delivers a line like "He don't eat no meat? That's O.K. I'll make lamb" and doesn't kill it with overemphasis. I enjoyed parts of "Wedding," and I'm not about to tell people that they should not have enjoyed it. I'm just afraid that Hollywood will respond to its success by making many more sitcoms in the guise of movies.

If filmmakers were able to find an older audience with an innovative system of promotion, couldn't they also find that audience with a stronger movie? And couldn't other filmmakers, using the same methods, find different audiences? What happened, for instance, to the college kids who were courted so assiduously in the late sixties and early seventies? When movies were aimed at them, directors and writers were encouraged to take risks, and American mainstream filmmaking entered its most creative period. Now that practically everyone goes to college, the college audience has ceased to exist in Hollywood's mind as a vanguard of taste. But maybe millions are waiting for new subjects and moods—waiting for a little attention. ♦

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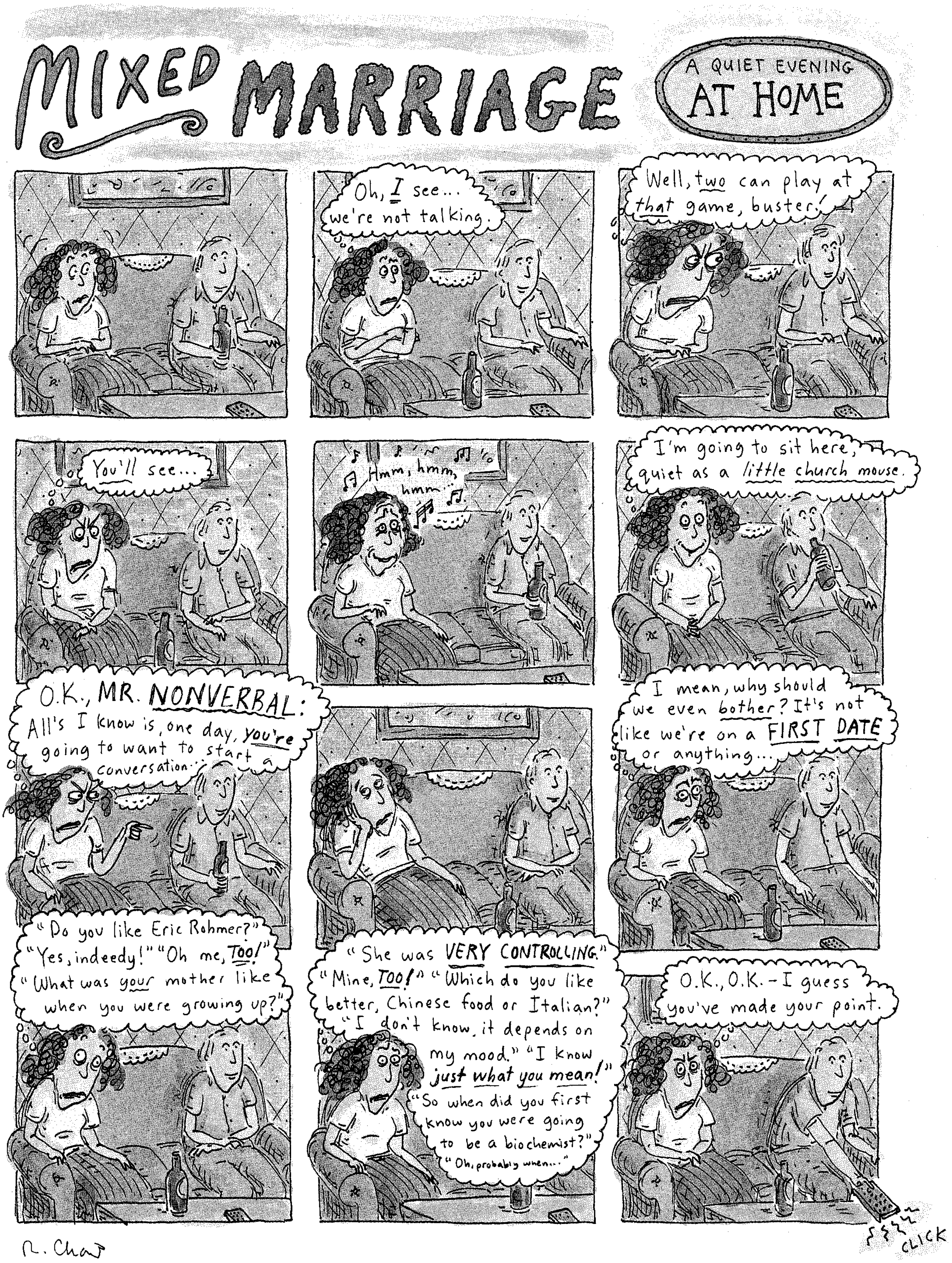
MIXED MARRIAGE
A QUIET EVENING AT HOME
Oh, I see... we're not talking.
Well, two can play at that game, buster!
You'll see...
Hmm, hmm, hmm...
I'm going to sit here, quiet as a little church mouse.
O.K., MR. NONVERBAL: All's I know is, one day, you're going to want to start a conversation...
I mean, why should we even bother? It's not like we're on a FIRST DATE or anything...
"Do you like Eric Rohmer?" "Yes, indeedy!" "Oh me, Too!" "What was your mother like when you were growing up?"
"She was VERY CONTROLLING." "Mine, TOO!" "Which do you like better, Chinese food or Italian?" "I don't know, it depends on my mood." "I know just what you mean!" "So when did you first know you were going to be a biochemist?" "Oh, probably when..."
O.K., O.K. - I guess you've made your point.
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